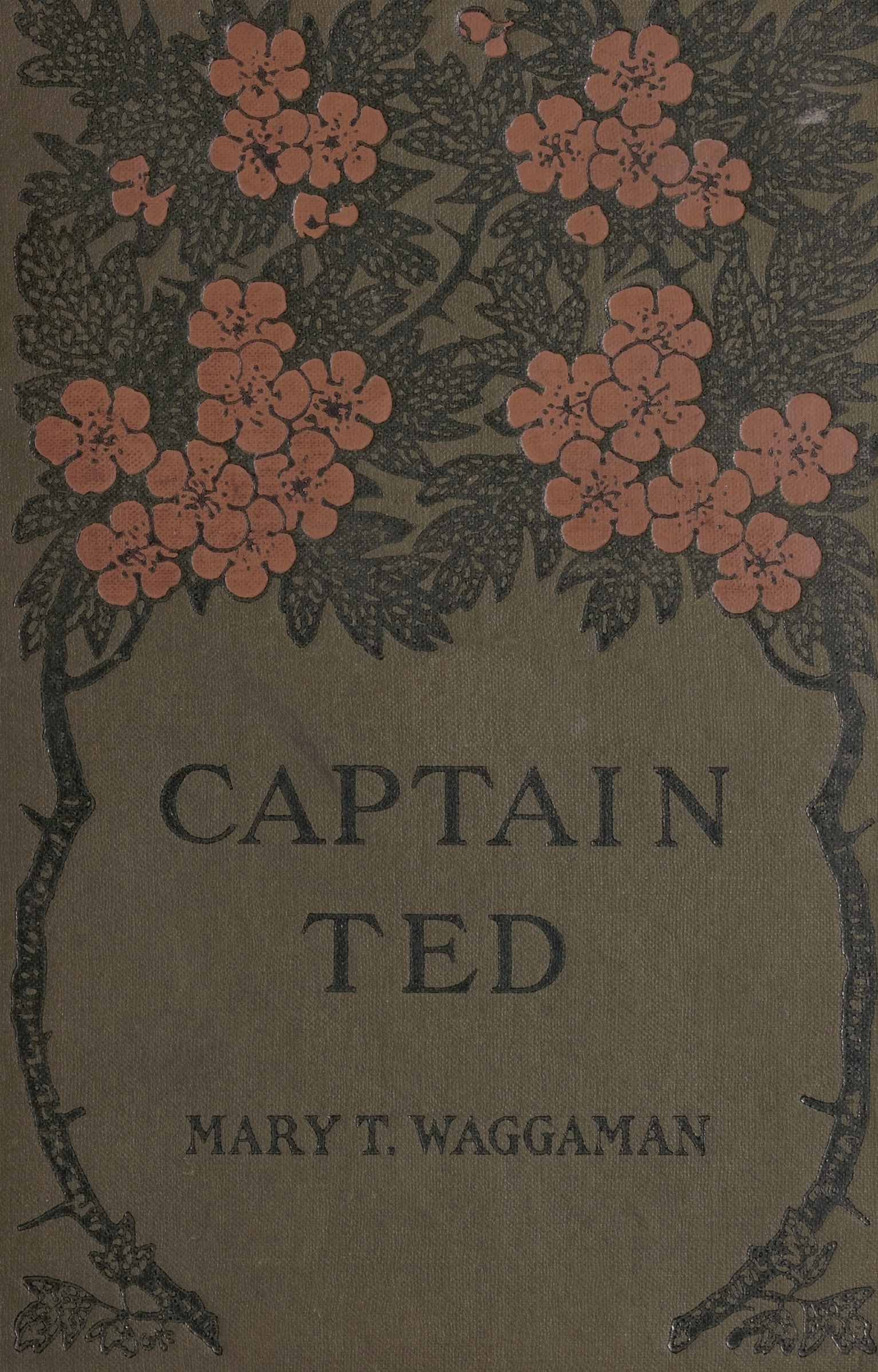

CAPTAIN TED

MARY T. WAGGAMAN

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CAPTAIN TED

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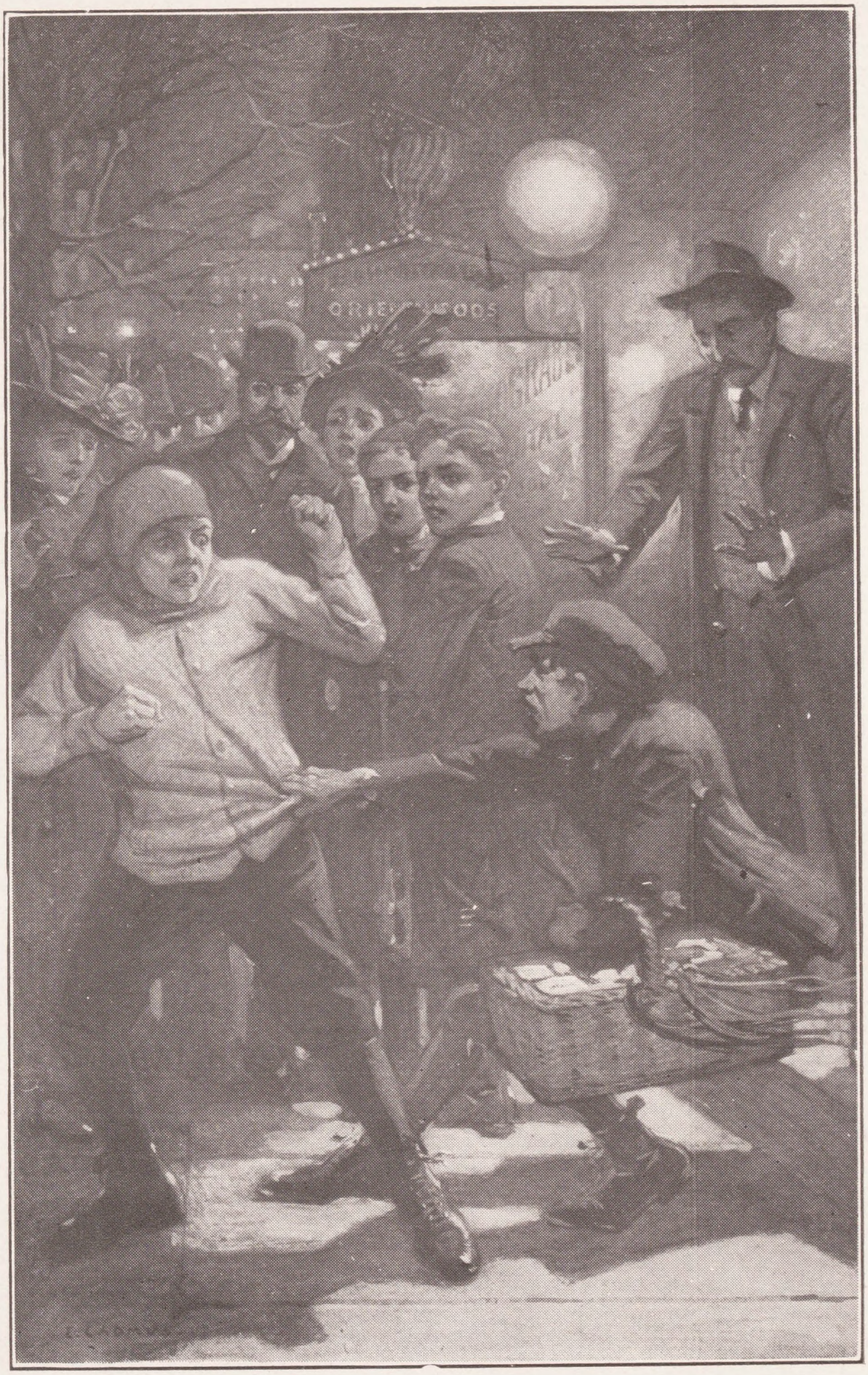

"And making a mad dive through the crowd, Humpty caught at a rough reefer."—See page 92.

CAPTAIN TED

BY

MARY T. WAGGAMAN

NEW YORK CINCINNATI CHICAGO

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CAPTAIN TED

CHAPTER I

"HOLDING THE FORT"

THE New Year battle was on. The dazzling stretch of St. Elmer's campus was white with the smoke of combat, as the snowballs of the "Pubs" thundered against the shining walls of the Fort, that had been the merry work of the college "Preps" all through the Christmas holidays. With its white packed battlements forming a twelve-foot square, its central tower upbearing the blue and white cross of St. Elmer's, that was to be the prize of the winners, Fort Kostka stood a record-breaker in college annals—a triumph of snow architecture that seemed to defy the powers of sun and storm.

"Holding the Fort" in sturdy pride were twenty Preps under the leadership of Teddy Thornton, the valiant captain of the small boys' football team, whose antagonists in many a hard-fought field, the Pubs, or public-school boys, had been challenged to make this New Year's attack.

And now the crests of the hills were lined with

juvenile spectators, and the wintry air was rent with shout and cheer. In the windows of St. Elmer's, the cassocked forms of prefects and teachers could be seen looking on with smiling interest in the manly game.

"On, boys—on! Give it to them again! Hooray for the Pubs! Hooray! Down with the blue banner!" went up the chorused shout, as the besiegers, under burly Bill Briggs, charged the shining battlements.

"Give it back to them, boys, give it back!" rang out Captain Ted's command. "Hold the Fort for St. Elmer's! St. Elmer's! Ho for St. Elmer's!"

And the white balls flew in glittering showers, while the merry war went on, the blue curve of the frozen river echoing with shout and cheer and boyish battle cry.

Three times the whole force of the Pubs was flung against Fort Kostka; but the white walls, hard packed into mimic marble by the sturdy young builders, stood unmoved. Twice reckless Dick Bentley, in a daring, forlorn hope, leaped the south wall to seize the banner, only to be caught by the heels by its vigorous wardens and tumbled ignominiously into the drifts without.

More than once St. Elmer's blue and white tottered and went down under the crash of a well-aimed snowball; but it was promptly caught up and replaced in waving triumph on its shining tower. The winter sun had dropped in ruddy glory behind the river hills before the deep-toned college bell called twice to end the combat.

Even snowballs, molded and sped by such sturdy young hands, can do a certain amount of work. Burly Bill's right eye was closed for repairs, and Dick Barton's bleeding nose had dyed the last of his ammunition a bright crimson; while Captain Teddy had a cut upon his cheek from a missile that Jack Frost had sharpened into an edged blade. But the opposing armies met in great good-humor.

"We'll get that blue bonnet ribbon of yours to-morrow," said the Captain of the Pubs, as he pulled himself into his great-coat.

"Try it!" tersely replied Captain Ted, as he shouldered the staff of his banner and prepared to climb the college hill.

"Bill called it a 'blue bonnet ribbon,'" said little Bob, indignantly. "If I had been as big as you, I'd have smashed his nose for it, Ted."

"And made a row and spoiled all our fun to-

morrow?" answered his officer. "Pooh, no! Never force a fight, Bob. That's what my father, who is one of the pluckiest men in the world, has always taught me. Never force a fight; but, once you're in for it, stand your ground, and make the other chap sorry that he tackled you. That's Shakespeare, father says—though it doesn't sound like it—and good Yankee grit besides. And that's what father does, too. Say! if you could have seen how he laid out the burglar that got into our house last winter—floored him with one blow of his fist! He learned boxing from an English master, and has got it down fine. He gives me lessons when we are down at Edgewater for the holidays."

"It must be fine to have a father like that!" sighed little Bob, whose parental tuition had been of a rather different order.

"You bet it is!" answered Ted, emphatically. "My dad's a dandy—not much for talking, but every word he says goes straight."

"Ever thrash you?" asked Bob, with interest.

"Once," replied Captain Ted, frankly. "I went in swimming in Six Mile Run, against orders, and then lied about it."

"Lied?" echoed little Bob, somewhat startled

by this open confession. "I didn't know you ever lied, Ted."

"I don't," answered Ted; "I never have since and never will again, but I did that once, sure. I was a little chap of nine, and got in with some rough country fellows, that called me 'Dolly Boy,' and 'Miss Prissy,' because I wore good clothes and minded my mother. And I turned fool and went in swimming with them, where the river was forty feet deep and running like a mill-race beneath the cliffs. I was carried half a mile down the stream, and nearly drowned; and I got home so blue and cold and scared that I hadn't any pluck left in me; and when father asked me where I had been, a lie popped out before I knew it."

"They will do that sometimes," said little Bob, seriously.

"But my father knew," continued Ted. "My! how his eyes did blaze and how he lit into me! 'Twasn't for the swimming—he wouldn't have minded that so much—but it was the lie that got him. I wasn't blue and cold long, I tell you! And that night, after I was in bed, he came and talked to me. He told me he'd rather have me drowned a thousand times than see me live to be a coward

and a cad—a liar. And I put my arms around his neck and promised him I would never tell another lie as long as I lived. And I haven't—I won't ever again. I'd rather be killed first," concluded Teddy, as he gave a twitch to his banner that had been caught in a snow-wreathed thorn bush, and, freeing the fluttering colors, bore them up the college hill.

Kind eyes were watching him from the granite-framed windows.

"Here he comes," said Brother Michael. "And he's clean done out with the day's sport, the poor lad! Sure and me heart went down in me boots when I heard Teddy Thornton was to be left here for the holidays this year. He'd be heading some mad mischief, I knew; so I told him how the boys had built a fine fort on the campus five years ago, and I wondered if he could beat it; and he went at it as if it were to win heaven itself for him. There's no half-way for Teddy either in work or play."

"Poor boy!" Father Bolton's face was grave and pitiful as he watched the young standard-bearer climbing the sunset hill. "This will be a sad change for him, I fear!"

"Sure it will that!" said Brother Michael, with

a catch in his voice. "It's he that always had the bold, warm heart and the open hand. You mind, the Finneys were all down with the fever last winter, and you gave orders that no boy was to go near their little place by the south wall? Didn't I find Teddy Thornton with all his month's pocket-money tied to the end of a pole reaching it to Micky Finney's window to buy oranges? And we all know he took penance for three days and paid damages rather than tell it was little Bob Connors that broke the chapel window with his baseball. 'My father won't mind a few dollars,' he said; 'but Bob's got a dad that would kick at a dime.' And now—now! Sure couldn't you keep the bad news from him until to-morrow, Father? The creature is worn out with the sport to-night."

"I'm afraid not. Teddy's mother will be expecting him at once."

"The poor woman! It's the black sorrow that she is supping this night. And how many children are there besides Teddy?"

"Three, I think—two girls and a baby boy. Ted is the oldest."

"And he not fourteen," sighed Brother Michael. "Ochone! ochone! The ways of the

Lord are wonderful, indeed! Here the lad comes now. You'll not be wanting me any more, Father?"

"No," answered the Rector. "Just tell Teddy I want to see him here."

And, feeling very much as if he were luring a young lamb to slaughter, Brother Michael slipped out on the broad porch, just as Captain Ted, bearing his colors, came up the steps, flushed and breathless.

"There it is, Brother—there's the flag! Those fellows didn't lay a finger on it, did they, Bob? My! it was a fine fight! We just knocked the Pubs to flinders. They couldn't get an inch on us. And Fort Kostka is standing without a crack or a hole, for all their pounding. Did you see the fun?"

"I did, Teddy dear—I did," said Brother Michael tremulously. "And—and"—he paused, choked somehow by the sight of the bright, boyish face so radiant in its triumph.

"We got those Ninety-Six boys you brag on all beaten to bang, haven't we now?"

"Sure you have, Teddy—you have," said the old Brother, with a break in his voice. "I'll never brag on the Ninety-Sixers again. You've got

them all beat this day, sure. And, Teddy lad, the Father Rector is——"

"He saw it, too," interrupted Teddy, jubilantly. "He was up at his window, waving his handkerchief. And Father Roland and Father Murray, too. I got a cut from a frozen snowball that made the blood fly; but I didn't even feel it, I was in such a whirl. We'll hold that Fort against the Pubs all winter, Brother Michael. Oh, it's the jolliest sport I ever tried! If you'll take care of this flag until I want it again——"

"I will, Teddy—I will take care of it for you," said the old Brother huskily, as he took the staff with its white Crusader's cross from the boy's hand. "I'll keep it for you, lad, until you want it again. And now, Teddy, sure the Father Rector is asking for you, lad."

"Asking for me!" exclaimed Teddy, in amazement. "The Father Rector asking for me! Where?"

"Up in his room, lad. I'm thinking—" there was no mistaking the break in Brother Michael's voice now—"I'm thinking, Teddy, it's news from home."

CHAPTER II

GATHERING CLOUDS

TEDDY'S brown eyes cast one bewildered look at Brother Michael—a look that went to that good old man's heart—and then the boy was up the granite steps, into the Father Rector's room with a bound. The red glow of the sunset sky through the stone-arched window, the snow-wreathed vine tapping against the pane, the grave, clear-cut, kindly face that turned at his brusque entrance, made a picture on our young Captain's memory forever.

"Is there—bad news for me, Father?" he panted.

"Yes, Teddy," a kind hand was laid on his shoulder, "bad news, my boy!"

"My mother?" gasped Teddy quickly.

"Not of your mother, my son: your father."

"My father!" a low, sharp cry broke from the boy's lips. "Dad!"

"He is very ill," the Rector went on with merciful haste. "He had a stroke of paralysis this morning. It was brought on by business losses.

Your mother has sent for you, my boy. You must go home and comfort her."

"Will—will dad die?" asked Ted, in a voice that sounded strange and hard to his ears.

"That I can not say, my son," was the grave answer. "The doctors fear the worst, but God is good. We will all pray for him. In any case, your place is by your mother's side. You must be strong, brave, manly for her sake; you will be a true son to her I know. And, remember, if St. Elmer's can do anything for you, my boy, you have friends here, friends who never forget. There—there! let the tears come, Ted. Don't mind me."

"Thank you, Father, but they won't," said the boy, huskily. "I—I—dad isn't—isn't dead yet, is he, Father?"

"Oh, no, no; and there is still hope for him, my boy! There is always hope while there is life. I have had your gripsack packed, and there is a train within the hour that will get you home at midnight. You have no time to lose."

Then it was all like a dim twilight dream to Teddy: the hurried parting from St. Elmer's in the gathering dusk of the white evening; the brief, hushed preparation, so different from the usual

riotous joy of "going home"; the tender sympathy of his teachers' hand-clasp; the odd constraint of the boy's good-bys; the sudden, solemn silence that seemed to have fallen on the glad music of his young life.

The supper bell clanged its cheery summons as he passed down the wide staircase; the merry shouts of the little boys echoed from their playroom; the deep, clear note of the Angelus came from the high clock tower—all the old familiar sounds seemed strange and far away to-night. It was as if he had been lifted into ways apart that they did not clearly reach.

Little Bob Connors, waiting at the end of the long corridor, slipped a small, half-frozen hand into Teddy's and said in an awed voice:

"You're not going for good, Ted?"

"I—I don't know, Bobby," was the low answer. "It's father, you know—and—and——"

"I know, and I'm sorry for you, Ted!" continued Bob, rushing in with ten-year-old daring where neither angels nor Father Bolton just now dared tread. "I'm—I'm sorrier than I can tell, Ted. And here's the fountain pen Uncle Rob sent me Christmas. I want you to take it, Ted, for keeps. I ain't never forgot about the chapel

window." And poor little Bob broke down with an irrepressible sniffle.

"Shoo! we're square on that long ago," said Ted gruffly. "I don't want to take your pen, Bobby."

"Please, Ted, please! I want you to have it. It's a fine one, never squirts or blots. Take it to remember me by, Ted."

"All right, then!" was the answer, and Ted gave a hard squeeze to the little frozen fingers that held the gift; and Bobby seemed to vanish in the twilight shadows as Father Bolton stopped to speak a paternal good-by and "God bless you, Ted!"

And then the college sleigh, that had carried off so many merry, whooping crowds to the depot, was at the door; and, springing into the silent, empty seat, Ted was whirled off down the snowy avenue; while the lights twinkling from the gray stone windows of St. Elmer's seemed to glimmer through a mist—a new, strange mist—in Captain Teddy's eyes.

But the plunge into the life, the light, the roar, the bustle of the great depot, was a bracer. A night journey alone was something new and stirring in Ted's experience. The mists cleared from his eyes under the flash of the arc lights, and the

strange weight on his heart lifted as he felt the strong, cheery pulse of the life around him. "There is still hope," Father Bolton had said, and at fourteen a whisper of hope is enough. One does not need a whole brass band to quicken the young heart-beats again.

And there was a big rush at the ticket window, and our young Captain had to hold his place strenuously against the push behind; for there was a great political convention in Teddy's native city that was drawing excited crowds, and the thrill of it all was in the air. Extra trains were on, and the great engines on the tracks were shrieking and puffing impatiently.

"A dollar for your place, youngster!" said a big, brown-faced man, who had just dashed in, breathless with haste and excitement. "I've a lot of baggage to check, and want my ticket right off. A dollar!"

"No, thank you, sir!" said Teddy, flushing. "I don't want a dollar, but you can have my place. I have no baggage to look after." And he stepped out of line.

"Thanks!" said the other. "You haven't learned the grab game yet, I see, my lad. Hustle to the end of the line, or you'll get left, as gener-

ally happens to boys of your pattern. Or stay! I'll buy your ticket for you. Where are you going?"

"New York by the next train," answered Ted.

"All right! I'll fix things for you. Never mind the money now. Just take Dolly out of this push and wait in the ladies' room for me."

"Dolly?" exclaimed Ted, looking around blankly.

"That's me!" said a little voice from between two stout ladies at his right. "Oh, take me out of this crowd, please! I'm being just mashed to death." And a very small young person, who seemed chiefly furs and curls, looked up at him beseechingly.

The two stout ladies held their own, and feathers and furs seemed mixed inextricably. But Captain Ted was equal to the emergency. With a sudden swing of his arm, he caught Miss Dolly out of the crush, and, perching her on his broad shoulder, bore her triumphantly into the clear space beyond, where he set her down to straighten her ruffled plumage like a bewildered little pigeon.

"It was the only way to get you out," he apologized. "You mustn't mind. I've whisked my little brother through a push that way many a time."

"But I'm not your little brother," said Miss

Dolly, severely. "I suppose, though, you had to get me out, or I would have been squeezed to death. I ought to have staid in the carriage, as Jack told me."

"Jack?" echoed Ted in surprise.

"Yes; my father. I always call him Jack. He likes it best. It was mama's name for him, and she is dead."

"Oh, I see!" muttered Ted softly.

"We were in such a hurry!" said Miss Dolly in her silvery treble. "Jack had a telegram that he must come right back. We've been spending the Christmas holidays with grandma in the country. She wanted to keep me, but Jack said, 'No, siree! I couldn't do without my little housekeeper.' And he *couldn't,*" continued Miss Dolly, with a shake of her curls. "He is such a stupid old Jack! He can't even sweeten his tea. And when I am at grandmother's he never goes home at all—just stays at his club with men. He says things don't go right at all when I'm away."

They had reached the ladies' room, and Miss Dolly swung herself up into a cushioned seat, looking small but important.

"Aren't you a little young for that sort of business?" asked Ted curiously.

"I'm seven and a half," answered the young lady. "How old are you?"

"Nearly fourteen," said Ted.

"That's a great deal older than seven and a half, isn't it?" asked Miss Dolly reflectively. "It's almost grown up."

"Well, it's getting there," replied Ted, who felt ten years older since the sun went down on Fort Kostka this evening.

"I thought you were a boy," said Miss Dolly in a disappointed tone.

"I am," answered Ted, "just a big boy yet. Teddy is my name, Teddy Thornton."

"A good name!" said a hearty voice behind him, and Miss Dolly's "Jack" clapped him on the shoulder. "A good name, and a good fellow, I'll be bound; though I haven't time to improve our acquaintance, for my train is being called now. Here's your ticket, my boy; and thank you!"

"And the money for it, sir!" said Ted, taking out his pocketbook.

"God bless me, I forgot the money! I haven't time to wait for it now. Send it to me some other time. Here's my card. Dolly dear, we haven't a moment to lose! Come!"

"Good-by! good-by! good-by!" called the

sweet little voice, as "Jack's housekeeper" was whisked through the opening gates where so many ways touch for one swift moment to part forever. "Good-by, Teddy." And, with a last glimpse of the fluttering feathers, Ted's quaint little fairy friend vanished.

He looked at the card he held. "John J. Jarvis, Dunmore," was its inscription. And then his own train was called, and he hurried on to take his place, and be whirled away through the darkness to meet the Sorrow whose thrilling whisper, reaching over these long miles of space, had called him home.

And as he sped along over the shadowy hills and faint-gleaming river, through the flashing lights of city and town, and out into the calm, starlit spaces beyond, the fear and grief that had been stifled for a few bright moments woke again in Ted's heart. His father, his brave, strong, loving, tender dad—dying; perhaps—perhaps—ah, Teddy's thoughts and lips could not shape the terrible word—*dead!*

If it had been his mother—his gentle, frail, delicate mother—it would not have seemed so strange, so bewildering, so incomprehensible. She was ill so often; ever since he could remember he

had been hustled off so that his shouts and noise should not reach her ear. But his father, his big, six-foot dad, who was always cheery and well, who never had aches or nerves, dad stricken down in all his health and strength and cheery life! It seemed impossible.

And then—for it had been a tough day on him—Captain Ted's curly head sank back on the velvet-cushioned seat, and he drifted off into a dreamland, where Burly Bill and his Pubs were charging a snowy ticket office, and a little golden-haired fairy sat under a blue banner pouring out "Jack's" tea; while Teddy himself, armed with a fountain pen, was squirting ink on all who came near.

And then—then—was it Brother Michael shaking him from his pillow in the dormitory? Was it the rising bell of St. Elmer's clanging so loudly in his ear?

"Wake up, youngster, wake up!" The gilt buttons of the conductor flashed before his half-open eyes. "You don't want to stay here all night!"

The lights of the great station were gleaming around him. His journey was at an end, he was home.

CHAPTER III

A HOME-COMING

How Captain Ted made the rest of the journey he never knew, his brain was in such a whirl, his heart beating so wildly with love and hope and sickening fear. It seemed all a mad dash and scurry through the midnight streets, until he stood breathless before his father's house, that rose tall in the darkness, and still with an awful silence which he trembled to break.

But no black pennant as yet fluttered from its door, and Ted's heart gave a wild bound of relief as he sprang up the steps and touched the bell. There was a patter of little feet in the hall, the big door swung open, and then his two sisters, Kit and Nell, were hugging Ted hysterically; while curly-haired Rick, aroused from the unusual experience of a midnight nap on the hearth rug, sleepily rubbed his eyes in the background.

"Dad?" questioned Ted, breathlessly.

"He is better, Ted—better!"

"Whoop-a-loo!" cried the young Captain, in irrepressible delight.

"O Ted, hush! hush!" exclaimed little Kit, in a scandalized whisper. "We mustn't make a breath of noise, the nurse says, or he'll get worse. Mama said we might all wait up for you, because they've taken our room and we were afraid to go up in the third story alone."

"And the doctors have been here all evening—three of them," continued little flaxen-haired Nell, as her sister paused in her excited story. "And Father Bryan came, too. And we didn't have any real dinner at all, Ted. Margaret was too done out, she said, to cook. And, oh, everything is going wrong!"

"Let it go!" said Ted, dropping down on the big lounge in the library, and mopping his brow, where, despite the wintry night, great drops of sweat stood out like beads. "As long as dear old dad is all right, nobody cares. Cracky! I never had such a scare in my life!"

"Oh, but dad *isn't* all right!" said Kit, solemnly. "He won't be well for a good while, Aunt Fan says."

"Oh, *she* is croaking around, is she?" said Ted bluntly.

"She's been expecting this a long time," said Nell, shaking her head.

"Of course she has!" replied Ted. "For downright black-crow croaking, Aunt Fan has that Cassandra we were studying about the other day beaten to a finish."

"You see, it was losing all his money that nearly killed dad," continued Nellie. "He put all he had in socks, and they fell down and——"

"*Stocks* you mean, Nell," put in Ted.

"Well, maybe; it was *something* to wear, I know. And we're all going to be beggars now. Where mama will get bread to put in our mouths, Aunt Fan says she doesn't know."

"Oh, cut all that out, girls!" said Ted cheerily. "You've got things mixed up bad."

"No, indeed, we haven't—we haven't, Ted!" was the eager answer. "Aunt Fan said so this evening. We heard it plain."

"*We* won't be beggars, will we, Ted," said little Rick, nestling close to his brother, "because *we're* boys?"

"That we are!" said Ted, drawing the curly head to his breast; "and the right kind of boys, Rick. There will be no begging done in this family while you and I are around to manage things, you can bet. Now, girls, see if you can't

take a clear, straight start and tell me all you know."

And then Ted learned, with many breaks and dashes from the point, that dad had gone to his office that morning apparently well, and had been brought home at noon in a carriage, voiceless and senseless, while the whole great city was thrilling with the fall in the stock market that had brought ruin to thousands of homes.

And while Ted was still sitting, blank and dismayed under this new phase of family trouble, Aunt Fan appeared. Aunt Fan's appearance in the family circle, even on the most roseate occasions, was always rather depressing. She was "dad's" widowed sister, who lived in a small apartment of her own, but had kept a disapproving eye upon her brother's household ever since his marriage. Everything had gone wrong there, according to Aunt Fan, who never had any children of her own, and who felt that measles and mumps and tumbles down the back stairs were all the result of bad management.

"Poor, dear Laura," as Aunt Fan called Ted's gentle invalid mother, was responsible for all—responsible even, the good lady felt, for the fall in stocks and poor "brother's" illness.

"Goodness gracious! you children up yet!" exclaimed Aunt Fan, as she saw the group in the library. "There is no law or order in this unhappy house! Go to bed at once! And, and, Theodore, I did not know you had come! Your poor mother has been asking for you."

"May I go to her?" inquired Ted eagerly.

"Not yet. She is with your father and you might disturb him. The blow has fallen just as I expected it, Theodore—the blow that I have been looking for all these years. My poor, poor brother!"

And Aunt Fan, who was fat and flabby, with dull gray eyes and a face creased into unhappy lines, sank down into a chair with a dismal sigh that made Ted's heart sink.

"But he is better, the girls say, Aunt Fan."

"Better!" echoed that lady, shaking her head. "I don't see it. He may pull through, as the doctors declare; but I doubt it. I am prepared for the worst, Theodore, the very worst. And what is to become of this hapless, helpless family, I am sure I don't know."

Ted felt that *he* did not know, either, as he looked at Aunt Fan sitting, heavy and dreary, in

her drab flannel wrapper. Hope seemed to die in his young heart.

"Not a dollar of life insurance, your poor mother tells me! Everything in his business," Aunt Fan went on, with a despairing sigh. "And that business is a wreck, I understand—a perfect wreck. Mr. Wirt was here this evening and I questioned him closely. He says everything has been swept away—everything; that your poor father went down under the shock that left him beggared and ruined. And the doctors say that, even if he recovers, he will be a helpless invalid for months, maybe years."

"Beggared! ruined! helpless!" Awful words that seemed to thunder into Ted's ears as Aunt Fan droned drearily on. Beggared! ruined! helpless! Sturdy, plucky fellow that he was, a sickening sense of weakness came over him. What could he do? What could a boy not fourteen do, with the strong master of the wrecked ship lying senseless at his post, and the breakers dashing over the drifting hulk?

And then, as our Captain stood dazed and weak and despairing, there came the trip of light-slippered feet down the stairs, a frou-frou of

silken skirts, and the breath of spring violets swept into the room.

"Teddy, Teddy, my darling boy!" called a sweet, silvery voice, and his mother's arms were around him, his dainty, delicate, beautiful little mother, looking like a picture in her silken kimono, with the golden curls, so like Nell's, falling loose about her sweet face, the fever flush of excitement on her pale cheek, the fever light of anxiety in her eye.

Oh, how little, how frail, how lovely she looked as she fell sobbing on Teddy's broad breast!

"My boy, my darling boy! Your father—your dear, dear father! Oh, help me to bear it, Teddy—help me to bear it, my boy—my big, brave, strong boy!"

Help her!—help her! At that low cry Teddy felt heart and hand and head suddenly steady into strange, new strength, that Aunt Fan's tears and groans could never shake again. Help her, this sweet, frail, lovely little mother! Teddy seemed to shoot up several feet taller as he clasped her to his heart.

"Help you, little mother darling! You bet I will! I am here to stand the whole push," he an-

swered cheerily. "The doctors say they will pull dad through, and——"

"Yes, yes, they give me hope—they give me hope, Teddy! Oh, I should die without it!" she sobbed. "But it may be months—long months—before he is himself again."

"A little tough on poor dad; but we can stand it, if he can," said Teddy bravely.

"And did they tell you we had lost—lost everything, my boy?"

"Everything? Not by a long shot, when we have each other! Dad went down pretty heavy in the stock market,I heard; but lots of other men do the same, and come up all right. Don't you worry, little mother. We'll pull through. You just coddle dad well again, and I'll do the rest."

"*You!*" exclaimed Aunt Fan gloomily. "You don't know what you are talking about, you poor foolish boy! What in the name of Heaven can *you* do, child?"

"Lots, as you'll see, Aunt Fan," said Ted pluckily. "Father Bolton told me to come home and stand by my mother like a man; and he is no fool talker, you bet!"

"My own dear boy! Ah, if you were a man indeed, Teddy!" sighed his mother.

"I am man enough for this job, little mother!" was the bright answer. "You just brace up, and watch me hold this family fort through the fight."

And Mrs. Thornton had to smile through her tears, as Captain Teddy nodded his curly head, and pressed his rosy lips into the grim, determined line of the picture that hung over the mantel—the old great-grandfather, another "Captain Teddy Thornton," who had held the Heights of Dorchester against the redcoats more than one hundred and twenty years ago.

Then mother and son went upstairs together, and Teddy found himself standing, choked and silent, in the dim, spacious room where dad lay upon the white bed, dull and mute and helpless, only the dark, restless eyes telling that life lingered still in the stricken form. It was a scene that Teddy never forgot. Often in the after-time it came back to him vivid in every detail: the dim, shaded light in the corner; the white-draped table, with the crucifix and tapers telling of good Father Bryan's visit; the little Sister of Bon Secours seated motionless by the bed; the pungent odors that filled the air; the awful, solemn hush over all.

"Speak to him," whispered his mother. "He

can hear, he can understand, though, alas! he can not speak."

But Teddy was voiceless. Looking on the dear face so strange and rigid, into the dear eyes so mute and bright, his lips could shape no word. For one dreadful moment Teddy's heart seemed bursting with its pain and grief; then he fell upon his knees with a great sob he could no longer hold.

"Dad!" he cried, hoarsely—"dear, dear, old dad!"

And the boyish cry seemed to thrill some deadened heart-chord into life again.

"Ted!" came the faint, faltering answer from the slow-moving lips. "Stand by your—mother, Ted—stand by, my boy—stand by!"

"Oh, he has spoken—he has spoken, Sister Felicie!" cried Mrs. Thornton rapturously. "The doctor said if he spoke he would get well."

And the little Sister smiled a nun's sweet, tranquil smile.

"Yes, God is good, *mon ami!* As we have prayed! He will get well!"

CHAPTER IV

A MORNING WALK

SISTER FELICIE was right. Slowly the Shadow of Death lifted from the Thornton home. But its blight remained. "Dad" was left weak and helpless as a little child. The days lengthened into weeks; the three doctors ceased their morning consultations; Sister Felicie, her duty done, flitted off to other homes; and still the sick man grew no stronger, but lay with his hand stretched out feebly to clasp "little mother's," dreamily forgetful of all that had passed.

Ted held his post manfully. The servants having scattered from the ruined household, he shoveled coal into the furnace, and snow from the sidewalk; he paid bills, he ran errands, he lifted dad in his strong young arms, and buttoned little Rick into his jacket and trousers every morning. He filled the saddened house with his life and cheer.

"I really don't see how you can whistle, Theodore!" said Aunt Fan in one of her mournful visitations.

"Better whistle than whine," replied Ted, as he snapped his fingers to Bowser, who sprang up from the hearth rug for a morning walk.

For Bowser, too, needed cheering. He had been sadly out of spirits since dad's illness. Something was wrong, he knew, though he could not exactly fix the trouble. Two or three times he had stolen into his master's room, where they had found him licking dad's helpless hand. There was no answering word or stroke; and that puzzled Bowser, for he and dad had been chums before Ted was born. If dad had been dead, he would have understood, and howled in dog fashion; but he felt that howling would be improper now. So he lay on the hearth rug and blinked and growled, and was snappish in his temper, and generally miserable. He even forgot the beef bones he had buried in the back yard, and began to grow as lean and long-jawed as a hungry wolf. Only Ted knew how to rouse him. And now when Ted snapped his fingers and whistled, Bowser felt things could not be altogether wrong.

"There's something the matter with that dog," said Aunt Fan sharply. "He has been sulking for days. It's a sure sign of hydrophobia. I'd have him chained up."

"Chain old Bowser! I'd like to see any one try it!" answered Ted, with a sparkle in his eye. "He is grieving for dad, that's all that is the matter with him; isn't it, old chap? And he wants a run in the snow, don't you, Bowser? Come on, old fellow, and have a race!"

And at the cheery call, Bowser shook off his troubles and went leaping and barking joyously at his young master's heels; while Aunt Fan sighed a thanksgiving that she had no children.

"Racing and whistling in times like these!" groaned the good lady. "Boys have no feeling at all."

If she had known the anxious thoughts that were filling Ted's curly head this morning, Aunt Fan's opinion of boys might have changed considerably. His feelings were almost too much for him to-day; and he must work them off somehow, or there would be a blow up.

Ted's duties were becoming complicated. It was all very well to go to market and run errands and pay bills as long as their little money had lasted, but now there was nothing to pay with. Only this morning mama, who had very vague ideas indeed about money matters, had sent him to

the bank with a check, and he had been tersely told that her account was overdrawn. And the landlord had sent twice for the rent already; the coal bin was nearly empty, the grocery bill due; and the pretty little mother, sitting in the quiet chamber, with dad's hand in hers, knew as much about business as a canary does of Latin verbs. Ted's own brains were "cobwebby," as Mr. Martin used to say when the boys in his class could not see through their mathematical problems; and Ted's brisk dash out into the wintry sunshine this morning was a desperate effort to clear the cobwebs away. It was the problem of a wrecked boat among the breakers, with only a fourteen-year-old captain at the helm.

There were friends, it is true—friends who came to inquire after dad, and sent flowers and jelly and fruit to his sick-room; but it would be altogether out of the question for "friends" to consider groceries and coal.

And though the brisk walk in the frosty air brought bright winter roses to Ted's cheek, and made old Bowser forget his troubles and remember the beef bones buried in the back yard, the "cobwebs" were not scattered at all when a familiar voice hailed Teddy.

"Hello!" called a boy of about his own age. "Ted, old chap, where did you drop from?"

Ted stared for a moment at the boy, and then his eyes flashed recognition.

"O Jimmy Lane!" he exclaimed in astonishment.

Jimmy Lane, the ne'er-do-well of St. Elmer's, the toughest, the roughest, the dullest of his class, buttoned up to the throat in a swell overcoat, a nobby hat set rakishly on his sandy hair, kid gloves on his stubby hands, his shoes brushed to a dazzling shine! This, Jimmy Lane! It was no wonder that Ted's eyes opened in amazement at the transformation.

"It's nobody else," answered his old schoolmate, grinning. "I've struck luck, you see, since they bounced me from St. Elmer's. How are things at the old dungeon? And what are you doing out of bounds this time of year?"

"Trouble at home," responded Ted briefly; while Bowser gave an impatient bark, as if he would like to move on.

"Trouble, eh? Nobody dead, I hope?"

"No, but father has been very ill, and has lost all his money."

"Geewhillikins! that *is* bad!" said Jim.

"Caught in the snap a few weeks ago, I guess. Lots of good men were. Left you skinned, eh?"

"Yes," answered Ted, warmed up despite himself by his schoolmate's sympathy; and again wise old Bowser barked his advice that it would be well for them to continue their walk.

"Tough luck, sure!" said Jim, nodding sagely. "But your mother has plenty of folks well fixed to stand by her."

"No," responded Teddy. "Mr. Wirt was dad's lawyer, but he had to go to Europe three weeks ago; his wife was ill and cabled for him. And we haven't any grandfather or uncles or anybody. Mother has no one but me."

"She hasn't?" exclaimed Jim, staring incredulously; for Teddy Thornton, trig and well dressed, with his holiday boxes, and his pocket-money, had seemed, to his envious eyes, one of the lucky boys whom troubles never reach.

"And all our money is gone, and I've got to go to work for her," continued Teddy resolutely. "Where is the best place to look for work, Jim? Do you know?"

"Looking for work, eh?" Jim's little blue eyes blinked at the speaker's boyish face, in wonder at its frank simplicity; for, though Ted had led the

class at St. Elmer's, while Jim slouched carelessly at its foot, our young Captain had yet to learn his first lessons in the school of the wicked world, where for the last eighteen months Jim had been an apt scholar.

"What d'ye think you can do?" asked Jim.

"Oh, anything!" replied Teddy, confidently. "Write letters, or make bills, or sell things, or collect money. I'd rather be a bank clerk or a bookkeeper, though."

"Oh, you would?" said Jim, with a twitching around the corners of his mouth that showed he was holding back a grin.

"I'm all right on bookkeeping," continued Ted. "Went through the whole course last year, and took the ticket every month. Got the set of books home now—journal, ledger, and all—without a blot. Made only one mistake in the whole bunch. Put *ten* thousand for *one* thousand in the ledger, and got things sort of mixed up. But Mr. Martin said I had the principles all right, and that mistakes like that didn't count. Know all about banking, too—checks and drafts and bills of exchange, and everything. Went through it year before last, after you left. If I could get a place as bookkeeper or bank clerk, Jim——"

"Maybe you can," said Jim, in an odd tone, and the blue eyes fixed on Teddy's face blinked curiously. "I've struck luck, as I told you. Got a fine place—twenty dollars a week, and plenty of plums thrown in."

"Twenty dollars a week!" echoed Ted breathlessly. "Golly! that's fine!"

"Well, it's pretty fair," said Jim carelessly. "I mean to strike for a raise next month, and get it, too. My boss has the stuff to pay out, and he wants a bright young fellow now. I shouldn't wonder if you'd suit him first-rate, Ted."

"Oh, do you think so?" asked Ted eagerly, with a remorseful consciousness of how he had looked down upon lazy Jim in the past. "If you'll help me to get in, I'll thank you forever, Jim. Mother needs money so much, you see!"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Jim hastily. "Come along and we'll try for it right now. Just you talk up to them about the college bookkeeping and the banking, and you'll make a strike of it, I know. George! that's an ugly-tempered dog of yours! Does he growl like this all the time?"

"No," answered Ted, laughing. "He's usually one of the best fellows in the world. He doesn't like my stopping to talk. There, there, Bowser,

old chap! We're going on again now. He's been moping ever since dad has been sick, and I brought him out for a run. There, there, quiet, old boy! Come on!"

And, though old Bowser still growled disapprovingly, Ted allowed Jim to lead him on through various cross-streets of which he knew nothing, until they reached a tall skyscraper that seemed to shoot up almost to the clouds, amid the dingy old rookeries around it.

"This is our place," said Jim, as he turned into the entrance that was very new and shiny, and sticky with fresh paint. "The 'wharf rats' call it 'The Bean Stalk,' it went up so high and quick."

"I hope there is no giant to grind our bones at the top," laughed Ted.

And Jim laughed very loud indeed, as if Ted had made a great joke.

"You can't take your dog up in the elevator," he said. "You'll have to leave him here with Nick. Nick!" Jim snapped his fingers in a lordly way to a colored boy waiting in the hall. "Just look after this young gentleman's dog until we get back, and I will have a tip for you."

"Will he bite?" asked Nick, regarding his bristling charge doubtfully.

"Not unless you try some fool tricks with him," answered Ted. "Lie down there, Bowser! I'll be back soon."

And, reassured by Ted's tone, old Bowser, who was a little tired after his run, stretched himself out in the friendly warmth of the steam heater, while his young master shot up in the crimson-cushioned elevator out of his help or reach.

"Well, you *are* up high!" said Ted, as they went up and up, and still upward, until it seemed there was to be no stop to their flight.

"Twentieth floor," said Jim; "but you don't mind that when you get used to it. Here we are now! You just wait here in the hall while I go into our office and see if the boss is in."

Ted waited while Jim hurried on down the long corridor to a door at its end, where he tapped three times. The door slid open as if by some hidden pressure from within.

Two young men were seated at the double desk playing cards. Their coats were off, and there was a bottle with glasses near, and the air was heavy with tobacco smoke.

"Confound you, Imp!" said one of them, looking up angrily. "Didn't I tell you to clear out

and not come near the place to-day? You've got your money and——"

"I know," replied Jim hurriedly. "I'll get out in a minute, Mr. Trapp; and I promise you won't see me for a week. But you said you wanted another boy."

"I don't," said the other with an oath—"no more boys of your picking, you rascal! I can stand *you* for the work you do, but I don't want any more of your sort."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Jim. "Didn't know this firm went in for the Sunday-school pattern. But this chap ain't *my* sort. He brushes his hair and says his prayers every morning, and ain't cut more than his milk-teeth. His father was caught in the crash the other day, and knocked to flinders; and Ted is out of school looking for a nice job—cashier or bank president—to support the family. He, he, he! Just bring him in here and let him talk, and you'll say that Teddy Thornton is just the sort of saphead you are looking for. You can pull the wool over his eyes and make him do anything you like."

"Thornton!" exclaimed the man who had not yet spoken, whirling around suddenly in his office chair. "T. B. Thornton's son, is it? I heard the

firm went down with a crash the other day. You've got T. B. Thornton's boy in tow, Imp, have you?"

"Out there in the hall, waiting for the job," answered Jim, with one of his wicked grins.

"Bring him in," said the last speaker imperatively. "Here, Trapp, put your bottle and cards out of sight, and get into your coat. We must not open the youngster's eyes too suddenly. I owe Mr. T. B. Thornton an old account—a *very* old account. He has forgotten it, I guess, but I haven't," and the sallow face of the junior partner in Jim's firm darkened with an evil frown. "I'd like the chance to settle it with his boy."

CHAPTER V

"THE BEAN STALK"

IN ANOTHER moment Teddy stood at the door, his rosy young face bright with boyish eagerness.

"Walk right in," said Jim encouragingly. "Mr. Trapp and Mr. Sharkey, this is my friend, Teddy Thornton."

"Sit down, young gentleman, and I'll attend to you in a few minutes," said Mr. Trapp, who was very busy over a big ledger; while the dark-eyed Mr. Sharkey, with bold, brisk strokes of the pen, was dashing off a letter on the other side of the desk.

Captain Ted sat down in a very shiny chair, and looked around him with interest. Everything was bright and fresh and new, a little too fresh and new perhaps to please experienced eyes. It looked as if the firm, like the bean stalk, might have shot up in a night. But Teddy's business education had not taught him to distrust fresh paint.

Mr. Trapp, having settled a long column of

figures to his satisfaction, clapped a blotter on his big ledger, and, whirling round in his office chair, was ready to talk. But the dark-eyed Mr. Sharkey still wrote busily on.

"Jim tells me you are looking for a place, young man," began Mr. Trapp, who was rather stout and red-faced, and wore a large diamond scarf-pin. "Time is money in this firm, as you see; so we won't waste needless words. What is your name and age, and where have you worked, and what can you do?"

It was a brisk opening fire, but Captain Ted met it bravely.

"My name is Theodore Thornton, sir, and I shall be fourteen in March. I am just from the grammar class in St. Elmer's College, and have worked only at my books; but I will try to do anything you wish."

"Do you know anything about bookkeeping?" asked Mr. Trapp.

"Oh, yes, sir!" was the answer. "I have taken the whole course, single and double entry. We did banking business, too—coupons and checks and everything, with red and white counters for money."

There was a slight cough from the other side

of the desk, but the dark-eyed Mr. Sharkey did not look up from his work. Jim had turned away, and was contemplating the bird's-eye view from the window.

"I'd like to get a job right away," continued Ted. "Father's ill and may not get well for months."

Then for the first time Mr. Sharkey looked up and spoke.

"Does your father know you are looking for work?" he asked.

"Oh, no, sir!" responded the boy sadly. "He doesn't know anything. He had a stroke, the doctors call it, when his business went to pieces last month, and he has not known much about anything since. He will get all right, they say; but meantime our money is gone, and I've got to look after mother and the girls. You see, there is nobody else." Ted's brown eyes met with boyish confidence the dark, piercing gaze fixed upon his young face. "I am the oldest boy, and we haven't any uncles or grandfather or—or anybody."

"I see," answered Mr. Sharkey, "I see." And the word came from his lips with a queer sound that resembled the hiss of a snake in the grass. "It

strikes me, Mr. Trapp," he continued slowly, "that this boy is just the sort we want."

"I was just thinking the same thing," replied his partner. "Of course we can't give him charge of our books or our banking business just yet. But in time—when he learns—ahem—our methods, he will be very useful to us."

"Very useful, I am sure," added Mr. Sharkey; and again the same hiss seemed to come from his set teeth.

"I will try, indeed, sir," said Teddy eagerly.

"We can pay you only ten dollars a week at first," observed Mr. Trapp, who sat back in his chair, his diamond scarf-pin flashing and winking like a watchful eye. "But, as Jim here will tell you, we are liberal. All extra service is extra pay, and we will increase your salary as you learn the business."

"Yes, sir," said Ted, a little crestfallen, we must confess, when he thought of the landlord and the coal bin. Only ten dollars! Ted had a woful remembrance how his ten dollars of Christmas money had melted with no perceptible residue but a new jackknife and a pair of skates.

Mr. Sharkey's keen dark eyes caught the look, and Mr. Sharkey's quick ear the disappointed tone.

"Of course, as Mr. Trapp informs you, there are 'extras,'" he hastened to add, "work after hours, at night especially."

"Oh, I wouldn't mind night work at all, sir!" said Ted. "I just bathe my eyes now and then to keep them open, and I don't even wink. Hal Ellis taught me that trick last year when we sat up over our late exams."

"You're the right sort, I see," said Mr. Sharkey, with a harsh laugh. "We'll put you on night work, then, at double pay, as soon as we can; and we'll look for you to-morrow at nine o'clock sharp."

"Thank you, sir!" was the bright answer. "I'll be here sharp and sure."

And Ted hurried away with Jim down the Bean Stalk, to rejoin old Bowser, who was sleeping on guard, as sometimes the wisest of dogs and soldiers will do; while Trapp, after closing the door by pressure of a noiseless spring at his feet, leaned back in his chair and shook with laughter that made the diamond in his scarf-pin blink and wink with glee.

"How old did he say he was, Sharkey?" he asked at last.

"Nearly fourteen," was the brief answer.

"Fourteen! Good Lord! Fourteen! Why, six-year-old Tommy Bond is a sharper to him! Fourteen! Did you ever hear or see such an all-round simpleton, Sharkey?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Sharkey, who had risen from his chair and was looking moodily out of the high window. "I was once just such an all-round simpleton myself."

"You!" exclaimed his partner, with a hoarse laugh—"*you,* Ned Sharkey!"

"Yes, I, Ned Sharkey," repeated the other; and, as he turned from the window and faced his companion, there was a fierce glitter in his dark eye. "Perhaps you've heard the story how the devil was an angel once. Well, that's my case. And it's those angels that make the best or the worst kind of devils, as you can guess. They know the ropes and how to handle them. I've got a grudge against this young simpleton's father, as I told you. He caught me at a little trick that would have made my fortune a dozen years ago. I am going to even up, if I can, with his boy."

"And turn another angel into a devil?" laughed Trapp coarsely.

"Exactly," answered Sharkey, and the evil light

seemed to flame brighter in his dark eyes. "It may take a little time, but I think I can do it in the end."

* * * * *

And Teddy went home, breathless with excitement, to tell the good news, that filled his little family with wondering delight and pride.

"O Teddy dear," cried his mother, half tearfully, "it is so brave, so wise, so manly in you to find work so soon! Oh, they are good men, I am sure, to take you up so quickly!"

"Tip-toppers," said Ted enthusiastically, "Jim says I'm in luck. I couldn't get a better place. Ten dollars a week isn't much, of course; but I'll begin to double it pretty soon, for I mean to work like a Turk for them. I told you I'd fix things. Do you think dad would feel better if we told him about it, mother?"

"Oh, no, no!" she answered hastily. "He doesn't understand that our money is all gone, and it might trouble him, Teddy. He is in a sort of dream yet. When he rouses and knows what a dear, brave boy you have been, he will be so glad and proud of you! And I had another pleasant surprise to-day—a letter from Father Bolton. He enclosed a check for fifty dollars,

which he says your father had left in his hands for various expenses, and which he returns to me with such kind, cordial words of sympathy."

"Je-ru-sa-lem! we *are* in luck to-day!" cried Ted. "I had only one dollar and a half left, mother, excepting that ticket money of mine, that I've been keeping for the gentleman that paid my way home. It has come back from the post-office twice. No one knows where Dunmore is."

"I do," said little Nell, looking up from her geography lesson. "It's in Scotland."

"Smarty!" laughed Ted, pulling her fair curls. "You're learning too much, Nell. Your head won't hold it all."

"Yes, I'm studying hard," said little Nell, gravely. "Sister Angela says girls must study hard when their fathers are sick and haven't any money; then, when they grow up, they will know how to do lots of things—teach school and give music lessons and write books. I mean to write books," added Nell decisively.

"Oh, you do?" said Ted, sitting down beside his pet sister, and twirling the would-be authoress up on his knee. "What kind of books, Nellikins, fact or fiction?"

"Neither," replied Nell. "Just books with

green and gold covers, and plenty of pictures and not much reading. Then I will sell them at the stores and have money to make caramels. We haven't had any caramels since Christmas, and Kit makes them so good."

"Then you'll have some to-night," said Ted, cheerily. "You've got a brother in business now, Nellikins, and he will pan out for the stuff. The kids have had a tough time of it, mother. Let's sweeten things up for them with a candy stew."

And, much to Aunt Fan's horror, there was a celebration that night. Delicious, sugary odors stole through the house, and ripples of merry laughter came from the kitchen. There a big pot boiled and bubbled upon the range; and Kit, tied up to her neck in one of Margaret's aprons, and armed with a huge wooden spoon, stirred and stewed; while Nell buttered the waiting pans; and Ted and little Rick, perched upon the ironing table, looked on in delighted expectation.

"It's a murdherin' waste," grumbled Margaret, who had nursed Ted in his babyhood, and who was "holdin' things together for the craythurs" in the kitchen by ways known only to the good angels who watch such humble deeds of love. "A murdherin' waste of good sugar, and I'll have my

pots and pans left in a fine mess. But it's a black, bitter time the craythurs have had for the last six weeks. There, Miss Kitty darlint, let me sthir awhile, afore your face is burnt to a crisp intirely."

"Yes, stand back, Kit, and cool off, or you'll bubble up yourself," said Ted. "This is sort of hot fun, anyhow. I'd rather have the Jack Frost dumplings we used to make at St. Elmer's."

"How do you make Jack Frost dumplings, Ted?" asked little Rick.

"Dump a snowball into your plate of molasses. It's fine, I tell you! Sometimes a lot of us used to chip in and make it lemons and sugar, but the molasses was just as good."

"O Margaret, let us have Jack Frost dumplings for dinner to-morrow!" pleaded little Nell, eagerly.

"Faith, and I'm thinkin' you'd find them impty 'atin'," laughed Margaret. "They'd be like Kilkannegan's broth."

"And what is Kilkannegan's broth, Mammy Meg?" inquired Ted, giving the good cook her old nursery name.

"Sure haven't I ever told ye, thin? But maybe I haven't, for it's a long, throubled story, that when ye were babies ye couldn't understand."

"A true story?" asked Ted, with interest.

"I'm not swearin' to that," replied Margaret, cautiously. "It was my grandmother that told it to me whin she was more than eighty years, and she has been dead forty years this last Michaelmas. And though she was a wise, holy woman in her day, what with her pipe and her dimmin' eyes, ye couldn't expect her to see everything that had happened in a stretch of eighty years clear intirely. So, though it mayn't all be the blessed truth, there's a dale of wisdom in the story."

"Oh, tell it to us please, please!" went the beseeching chorus.

"Wait a bit, thin, till I pour out this sugar stuff into the pans; for it is biled to the queen's taste now," said Margaret.

And while the caramels cooled, the young cooks perched in various positions around Margaret's big splint rocking-chair. With Kit on the wood-box, Ted on the ironing table, Nell on the carpet cushion that sometimes eased the good woman's tired feet, little Rick in his baby place astride her knee, with the shining tins on the dresser winking back the ruddy firelight, and the air full of spicy sweetness, the kitchen was a cheery place as Margaret began her story.

CHAPTER VI

KILKANNEGAN'S BROTH

"IT WAS me grandmother, as I said, that told me the story," prefaced Margaret; "and it all happened whin she was a girl, which was—but sure I never was good at figurin'——"

"One hundred years ago, at least," interrupted Ted, with a mathematician's confidence.

"And that's a long time," continued Margaret, "a long time, me darlints."

"You bet it is!" said Ted. "Why, a hundred years ago the American Eagle hadn't learned to flap his wings; couldn't do anything but fight for his own nest. But now, geewhillikins, folks had better look out for him. He can skim and swoop over sky and land and sea, I tell you," observed our young Captain with patriotic pride.

"Oh, hush, Ted! Let Margaret go on," said Kit impatiently.

"I was but a bit of a colleen, like Nellie here, whin me grandmother was bendin' and tremblin' with all her weight of years; but I can see her now sittin' in the old cabin before the chimney, where

the peat fire was burnin', with her beads in her hands, and her blackthorn stick ready to crack us whin we didn't mind what she said; a big white cap ruffled around her face, that was all puckers and wrinkles but for the eyes, that had the old fire and light in thim still. She was the wonderful old woman, and many were the quare tales she told of all she had heard and seen, but the 'Kilkannegan Broth' was the quarest and strangest of all.

"It was whin she was only a girl herself that the black clouds of throuble hung heavy over poor Ireland. Master Teddy has learned all about it in his books, I know: how the Sassenach had his foot on her neck, and the devil his will and his way, and never cross or Mass or holy priest dared be seen from shore to shore."

"That's right!" said Teddy, with a nod. "Mr. McMann told us all about the 'Penal Laws,' as he called them. The Catholics couldn't have houses or lands or schools, or get married or buried, or anything. And the priests had to hide in holes and caves."

"Ah, they did, they did!" resumed Margaret. "Sure, wasn't there a place behind me own father's house, deep down in the ground, with a

rock for an altar, that was called the Soggarth's Hole? Ah! thim were black days, as me poor grandmother used to say; and she was in the darkest and the thickest of it. For she was only a bit of a girl whin the blight struck the praties, and they blackened and withered in the fields for miles around Ballycreagh; and there was food for naither man nor baste. And soon the male bags were impty, and the milch cows wint dry, and the pigs sickened and died afore they could be kilt naturally; and sorra a grain was left for even a starvin' hen to scratch.

"There was only the soup-house, where the hungerin' craythurs might go to save their bodies and sell their souls. For though the big pots were there, simmerin' and smokin' with cabbages and onions and praties, until the smell filled the air like the breath of roses in June, sorra a drop or sup could ye taste until ye gave up holy Faith and holy Church, and promised yer childher should be at the meetin'-house to be made into black heretics."

"And did they do it?" asked Kit breathlessly.

"Sell their souls to the 'soupers,' is it? Not they!" answered Margaret in triumphant scorn. "Never man or woman or child in Ballycreagh

could be bought by that devil's stew, save only the one I'm tellin' ye about, and that was me grandmother's born cousin, Tim Kilkannegan. Tim was a wild gossoon, with the nimblest leg at a dance and the quickest fist at a fight and the sweetest voice with a girl in all the county. But the starvin' wint hard with him; for, though he minded his soul on Easter Day, he took the world fair and aisy the rest of times, too fair and aisy for the good parish priest, who had many a crack at him for his rollickin' and blatherskitin'.

" 'The devil will have ye yet, Tim Kilkannegan,' " he would say in warnin'.

" 'And it's a poor bargain he'll find me, Father,' " Tim would answer humbly enough; for, wild as he was, he knew his duty to the clergy.

"But, as me grandmother said, the starvin' wint hard with Tim; for he had been used to his fill of praties and buttermilk and stirabout the year round, with often a bit of bacon and greens of Sundays and holydays. But now the pig was dead, and the cow was dry, and the praties all rotten in the black ground, and the stirabout was little more than boiled water. And, though Tim drew in his waistband and tried to whistle the hunger away, the smell of the soup-house came to

him in his dreams and his prayers, and he couldn't get rid of it. 'Sure, it's as Father Malone says,' he muttered to himself one evenin', as he came home with the legs tremblin' under him and his head swimmin' with weakness. 'The grace of Heaven isn't in me like the rest of thim, and I'll have to give in. I'm off to the soupers this evenin'.' "

"Oh, but he was so very hungry he couldn't help it, could he, Margaret?" said little Nell sympathetically.

"Yes, he could," declared Captain Ted. "He wasn't clear grit, that's all. But go on, please, Mammy Meg!"

"Well, with that word," continued the narrator, "he picked up his stick to steady himself and started off to the soup-house. And because of its closin' at sundown—and it was a good three miles by the road—he took the short cut through the bog. And the bog of Ballycreagh, as even the childher knew, was no place for a Christian man or woman after sundown. For it was one of the places given up to the fairies whin they were druv from the forests and fields; and whin *they* are about their business, they don't want to be throubled with meddlers. And, as bad luck would

have it, poor Tim's head being a bit light and his body weak on account of the fastin', he lost his road and stuck in the bog. And there he was whin the sun wint down, and the fairies' day began, as it does whin the day ends for us, that have bodies to rest and souls to save in the darkness."

"But—but, you know," interrupted Nell, a bewildered little pucker between her bright eyes, "there are no fairies really and truly. Sister Angela told us so, Margaret."

"I'm not sayin' there is," returned Margaret, a trifle sharply. "I'm only tellin' ye the tale as me grandmother told it to me; and ye must mind, childher, there's a dale of differ atween the old country and Ameriky; and, though this is the fine, elegant place for work and pay, there's no need for a craythur that can live on a drop of dew or a sup of honey from a clover top to cross the sea. So there's never a fairy in Ameriky, as we all know."

"But Tim met them on the bog, didn't he?" asked little Rick eagerly.

"He did," answered Margaret, "or me grandmother told me he did. He was stumblin' on as well as he could through mire and pool, with the

sun far down behind the hills, and the darkness fallin' fast around him, whin, right in his way, he saw a little man in green. He was ridin' a grasshopper, and he had a bit of candle in his cap no bigger than the spark that flies up the chimney whin ye stir the fire of a winter night; and he held the thorn of a thistle bush for a sword.

"'Who are ye, mortal, and what are ye doin' here?' he axed in a voice that was like the voice of an unfledged bird; and, though Tim could have blown the craythur away with one whiff of his breath, he was took all of a-tremble as if the giant Knockomarra himself was afore him.

"'My name is Kilkannegan, yer honor,' he stammered, 'and I was crossin' the bog on a bit of business and lost me way.'

"'Can ye give the password?' axed the little man.

"'Sure—sure I can't, sir,' answered Kilkannegan, feelin' every drop of his blood run cold.

"'Thin ye're my prisoner, Kilkannegan,' said the little sojer, drawin' his sword.

"'Murdher! murdher!' cried Kilkannegan, drawin' back a step or two lest he should tread on the craythur. 'Be aisy with me, yer honor, and let me go. I mane no harm to you or yours.'

" 'Ye are on fairy ground,' the little man wint on; 'and thim that steps on fairy ground after the set of sun is prisoners to our King. Ye'll have to come with me.'

"Though Kilkannegan could have crushed horse and rider with a slap of his hand, he found himself followin' the little sojer as if he were pulled by iron chains. They wint on and on, the little man's spark of light dancin' afore Kilkannegan in the darkness, as he stumbled through mud and water and thicket and furze, until they reached the middle of the bog, where there had always been a wide black pool that in the hottest day of summer was never known to run dry.

"Sorra a drop of water at all was in it now; but in its place was a hollow, soft and green as velvet, with rows of the fairy stools we call mushrooms all around it, and the glimmer of thousands of little lights, and the flutter of little wings, and the pipin' of little voices; while in the midst of thim all, on a throne made of a water lily, and wearin' a crown that shone like a star, was the Fairy King himself. As Kilkannegan came forward, there rose a sound like the buzz of a millon bees, and the fairies flocked around the King until the flash of the lights and the shimmer

of the silver wings nearly struck poor Tim blind.

"'Stand where ye are!' said his guard, wavin' his sword. 'If ye step foot on the fairy ring, ye'll be swallowed up fifty fathoms deep.' And, with that warnin', Kilkannegan stood still enough, as you can guess.

"'Who is it ye are bringin' here?' axed the King as the little sojer rode forward into the hollow.

"'A mortal that I found on fairy ground,' answered the little man.

"'Had he no angel guard?' axed the King.

"'Never a one.' And Kilkannegan's heart wint down like lead in his breast; for the fairies had him, he knew.

"'Turn yer lights upon him,' said the King, 'that I may see what he is like.'

"And, with that word, all the fairies riz like a cloud, and every light was flashed upon poor Tim, till he seemed facin' the blaze of Judgment Day itself.

"'Sure I know him,' said the King. 'It's that reprobate, Tim Kilkannegan.'

"'It is, yer honor,' said Tim, all of a-tremble.

"'What were ye crossin' fairy ground for after

the sun wint down?' axed the King. 'There's no use in lyin', Kilkannegan. What brought ye across the Bog of Ballycreagh to-night?'

" 'Sure I was on me way to the soup-house, yer honor,' answered Tim, feelin' the truth must be told, or it would only be the worse for him. 'I can bear the starvin' no longer, me head is that dizzy, and me legs are that weak——'

" 'And so ye're off to the soup-house, Kilkannegan, to sell yer *soul?*' wint on the King. 'Look here, me fairies! Here's a mortal man that will sell his soul for a pot of soup.'

"And the buzz of scorn that wint up from the little craythurs was enough to turn Tim deaf for the rest of his life.

" "Tis shame on ye they're cryin', Tim!' wint on the King. 'Shame on ye, ye big, blind, blunderin' coward, ye! Shame on ye, Kilkannegan! There isn't the smallest fairy here that wouldn't give up the five hundred years of his life, with never a sorrow or a want or a heartbreak, with no work but to dance in the moonlight, or sip the honey and the dew—there's never a fairy, I say, that wouldn't give it all to airn the soul that ye're sellin' for a pot of soup. But souls are not for us,' said the little King, and there was a sound like a

sigh and a sob in his voice as he spoke. 'If they were, we would save and not *sell* thim, Kilkannegan.'

"And with that word the sorrow and shame seemed to cut into Kilkannegan's heart like a knife.

" 'I'll go back, yer honor,' he said. 'Let me off this time, and I'll go back and starve it out, and never think of the soupers again. I swear it, yer honor!'

" 'Go, thin,' said the King; 'and mind that ye keep yer word. But I'll never have it said that the Fairy King turned away a starvin' man, so before he goes give him his fill of fairy broth.'

"And with that the little craythurs flew off, and in another minute they were around him, each one with a bit of an acorn cup brimmin' with dew. And Kilkannegan supped and supped till he could sup no longer, and thin he was let to stagger off home as best he could.

"And, though me grandmother said he was a changed man from that out, he never forgot the taste of that fairy broth, and was a bit quare ever afterward, wanderin' around after night, lookin' for acorn cups to catch the dew, and tremblin' at

every grasshopper he saw. And the childher all around Ballycreagh heard the story; and whinever there was scant pickin' at home, their mothers would tell thim to be off with their acorn cups and catch some Kilkannegan's broth."

"But did all the poor people starve, Margaret?" asked little Nell anxiously.

"Sure, they didn't, or me grandmother wouldn't have been left to tell the tale. A shipload of food came over from Ameriky, that helped things wonderfully; and the praties grew elegant the next year, and there was food in plenty again in Ballycreagh—and the caramels are cooled now," said Margaret, with a laugh; "and me story is inded."

CHAPTER VII

BEGINNING BUSINESS

TED'S business life began next day. Nine o'clock found him at the top of the Bean Stalk, rosy and bright from his long walk, for he disdained the luxury of a ride.

Mr. Sharkey was at his desk, and welcomed him with an odd glance from his dark eyes.

"You're on time," he said briefly.

"Yes, sir; you can count on me for that always. Mother will see to it. She is so pleased that I have a good place. She told me to thank you in her name for taking me at my own word; but she says if you want references——"

"Not at all!" interrupted the gentleman hastily. "References are quite unnecessary. We take you on your own word, as you say. You can sit down there at the desk, and I will find you work to begin at once."

And Ted pulled off his overcoat and took his seat on the highly varnished stool before a very shiny desk that was screened from the main

room, and was ready to begin his commercial career.

"We are—ahem!—money brokers," Mr. Sharkey went on, and he pulled down several of the large new account books from the shelves. "I suppose you know what that means?"

"Not—not exactly, sir," answered Ted, frankly; "but I can learn, I am sure."

"You can learn, no doubt," observed Mr. Sharkey, with the unpleasant smile that made his face look darker than before. "In the meantime, for a beginning, just look over this Directory, and copy in your account book the names and addresses of all the lawyers in the city, so we can send them our circulars. Be careful that you get them all, and remember there is no hurry. Take your time."

"Yes, sir," answered Ted, very much impressed with the importance of his firm. "I will be very careful, indeed."

And so, with all the pleasant appurtenances of brand-new account books, spotless blotting pad, shining pens, and silver-mounted inkstand, began Ted's connection with Messrs. Trapp and Sharkey, and his hunt through the Directory for the legal lights of the city. It kept him very busy—

too busy to notice that Mr. Trapp and Mr. Sharkey's office was a very queer place indeed. The big account books on their desks were never opened, the new letterpress was never used, and there was seldom any mail delivered to the firm at the top of the Bean Stalk.

Luckily, as Ted thought, when he found the lawyers becoming monotonous, he was sent on errands to distant parts of the city; and when he came back he would find the office door locked and strange men shut up inside with the firm, talking and smoking; and Mr. Trapp's face was often red and his speech thick, though Mr. Sharkey was always quiet and dark and cool. Jim Lane did not appear at all during the week. He was away, his employers said, on "special business of great importance."

"Well, how do you like your job?" asked Mr. Sharkey as, when the week was up, he laid a crisp ten dollar note on Ted's desk.

"First-rate, sir," answered Teddy brightly. "I am only sorry I couldn't get on faster with my work, but there are a lot of lawyers in town. I've got down only to the J's."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Mr. Sharkey. "You're doing very well."

"Thank you, sir! I wasn't sure. I may tell mother, then, that you are satisfied?"

Mr. Sharkey hesitated.

"Oh, yes, yes!" he said. "Tell her you're doing all right."

"And I'm ready for night work whenever you have it for me," continued Ted. "I told mother she mustn't be anxious if I was out late sometimes, and she said she wouldn't. She knew I'd be quite safe here with you. So if you want me to stay and finish up my work——"

"No," said Mr. Sharkey in a harsh voice. "Not —not yet. We may have use for you later, but not—not yet. You can go home now."

"Thank you, sir! Good-evening!" said Ted; and, as he started off blithely with his first earnings buttoned up tight in his overcoat pocket, Mr. Sharkey flung himself back in his chair, and, biting off the end of his long, black cigar, began to smoke silently.

"We've got him hooked fast," laughed Mr. Trapp, who was reading his paper on the other side of the desk.

"I'm not so sure," was the brief reply.

"What!—a softy like that? The Imp is watching for him to take him out to-night. He will

spend all his money and want more. That's the way it is done, Ned, my boy. We've been there ourselves and know."

"Yes, we know," answered Mr. Sharkey, puffing his black cigar until the smoke clouded his dark face; "*we* know. But we hadn't a mother, Trapp. *He* has."

Ted sprang away from the Bean Stalk this evening, feeling as if he were treading on air. Ten dollars in his pocket had been no novelty to him in the past; but ten dollars made by his own work, ten dollars earned by six days' laborious hunt after lawyers, ten dollars to slip into little mother's hand to-night for groceries and coal—ah, this was something new and strange and delightful indeed!

He felt he must walk home; he was so full of spring and life and gladness, no car could hold him this evening. But he had not gone half a dozen squares when a hand clapped him on the shoulder.

"Hello, Ted!" said a familiar voice. "Don't you know your old friends any more?"

It was Jim, but not the flashy Jim of a week before: swell overcoat and nobby hat and yellow gloves were gone. This Jim was buttoned up in

a coarse reefer, with a red muffler about his neck, and a worsted cap drawn over his ears.

"Why, Jim old chap!" exclaimed Ted cordially. "When did you get back?"

"Get back?" echoed Jim. "Why—oh, yes, of course! Just got back this evening. How are you getting on?"

"Fine," answered Teddy jubilantly. "Just been paid off for the week."

"Ten plunks, eh? Well, I suppose that will do for a beginning, though it wouldn't suit me. I've got a pocketful to-night, too. Let's see a little fun?"

"Oh, I can't!" said Ted decidedly. "I haven't any money to fun with now, Jim. It's all got to go home."

"I don't want you to spend any money: I'll do the whole business myself. I'm standing by you straight through, Ted."

"I know you are, old fellow!" answered Ted, warmly. "You've just been the best sort of a friend, Jim, and I'll never forget it. But I can't do any frolicking even on you. I'm not in for that sort of thing now. I'm the rattlepated kind, as old Brother Michael used to say; and if I once got going I'd never know when to stop. No, sir!

I've got too much trouble on my hands now to start Teddy Thornton at his old monkeying," concluded the speaker, with his great-grandfather's look and nod.

"Pooh!" said Jim lightly. "Don't turn into a Miss Prissy, Ted. It can't hurt you to take a bite at the restaurant here with me. They do up oysters in fine style. And we'll take in the Hippodrome afterward; there's a dandy show there to-night."

"Can't do it, Jim," replied Captain Ted. "Haven't the money to spend myself, and won't sponge—never did, and never will. But I'll tell you what, old fellow! You come home with me. There isn't much fun going on in our house just now, it's true; but we'll have hot flapjacks and syrup that can't be beat for supper; and we'll go out skating in the Park afterward. The ice on the lake is fine, and I've got two pairs of London skates that go ahead of that winged-heeled Mercury we used to study about. They fairly fly."

Jim stared at the speaker silently for a moment. Home with Teddy Thornton! "Home." It was a word that never had had a place in Jim's vocabulary. His two years at St. Elmer's had perhaps been the nearest to it that he had ever known; but

even at St. Elmer's he had been a rebel, an outlaw. Home! Jim never remembered having gone "home" in all his fourteen years of life. Crowded boarding-houses, flashy hotels, rooms where his father sat up all night playing cards, while his stepmother went to dances and theaters—all these Jim had known, but "home" never. He really felt a little curious to see what a *home* was like; besides, he had his orders about holding on to this new recruit of Trapp and Sharkey, and they must be obeyed.

"Your mother won't want me," said Jim, doubtfully.

"Oh, yes, she will!" answered Ted. "Mother is always glad to see anybody I bring home. And she knows all about you, Jim. I told her——"

"You—you did?" said Jim.

"Yes—how good you had been to introduce me to your firm and get me the place," continued Ted. "She said boys didn't always stand by one another like that, and you must be the right kind of a friend. She'll be glad to see you all right, you can bet. We will take the 'L' here," said Ted hospitably, feeling that he could not expect Jim to walk off his superabundant spirits. "It will put us home in fifteen minutes."

And in that time they were indeed in a place that Jim felt was unknown land to him. Soft rugs, pretty curtains, and handsome furniture were no novelty; but there was in Teddy's "home" an air that Jim had never breathed before.

His usual assurance quite deserted him when he found himself in the quiet library, where Kit and Nell were studying their lessons by the shaded lamp, and little Rick and Bowser were stretched together on the hearth rug before the glowing fire, and a sweet little lady all in soft, silvery gray met him with smiling face and gentle words of welcome.

Only Bowser growled—growled so persistently and inhospitably that he had to be sent out of the room for his bad manners; while Jim, seated on the soft-cushioned divan beside Ted's mother, longed to kick the snarling brute; and wondered why he felt so hot and uncomfortable and choky when Ted drew out his ten dollars and told how fine Mr. Trapp and Mr. Sharkey were, and how pleased they seemed with him, and how they told him he would be able to double his money as soon as he learned the business.

"And you will learn very soon I am sure," said Mrs. Thornton fondly. "Father Barry was here

to-day. He brought two gentlemen who would like to rent our upper rooms, Ted. He was saying how fortunate you were to get so good a place."

"And Jim did it all," said Ted, clapping his schoolmate's shoulder. "It takes the old St. Elmer boys to stand by one another, doesn't it, Jim? And he was afraid to come home with me to-night. Said maybe you wouldn't want him, mother," laughed Ted, as if that were indeed a joke.

"Not want you, my dear boy! Not want such a friend of Ted's!" And Mrs. Thornton turned on Jim a reproachful glance, that made him look anywhere but into those gentle eyes.

Then Ted had to run upstairs to see dad, who, propped up now in a big cushioned chair, still lived in a strange dream-world that no trouble or worry seemed to reach.

Ted sat down beside him, and lifted the dear, helpless hands to his lips, and told him he had a fine place downtown, and everything was O.K. And dad, whose brain had been so quick and eyes so keen, and hand so strong to protect his boy, asked no further questions.

"That's right," he said dully; "all right, Ted, good boy! Stand by your mother, Ted."

Ah! there seemed no one to watch, no one to

warn Ted of the paths of peril into which he was so innocently venturing; no one to tell him that the Bean Stalk was a far more dangerous climbing place than that which grew in Jack's garden of old; no one to whisper that Trapp and Sharkey were a new kind of giants that lured boys by golden snares to sin and ruin, without giving the old-fashioned giants' honest warning:

I'll grind your bones to make my bread.

For there are modern giants much worse than the clumsy, old-fashioned, three-headed fellows who roared and blundered after boys that they never caught. The modern giants never roar and never blunder, and they are pretty sure to catch.

CHAPTER VIII

TEDDY'S "FRIENDS"

THAT "evening at home" was an altogether new experience to Teddy's guest. Jim's father, a careless sporting man, had, on his second marriage, put his boy at St. Elmer's to get him out of "Nettie's" way; and his enforced return to the family circle had not been conducive to its happiness or peace. Mr. Lane's second choice was a vain, silly woman who cared for nothing but dress and amusement; and the only conversation, when she and her stepson met, was, to use Madam Nettie's own expression, "sassing."

Ted's home and Ted's family—the gentle little girls, the affection, the courtesy, the happy freedom of their intercourse—were revelations of a world that seemed as far away as the planet Mars from the life Jim had known.

True, the supper was not much, as he thought rather contemptuously. But the table was set with snowy linen and delicate china; the round of cold corned beef was wreathed with parsley, the butter molded in pretty balls, and the bread cut wafer

thin; while Margaret, who brought in the smoking flapjacks, was as spotless in cap and apron as if she had just stepped out of the advertising page of somebody's "soups." And Ted told of his day's doings, and Kit related her pleasant experience of lunch with Marjorie Lee, and Nell had won the red apple that was Sister Angela's daily prize to her best scholar; while little Rick, perched on his high chair at Ted's side, managed to sandwich in an exciting account of the big butcher's dog that tried to fight Bowser and got the worst of it, *"you bet!"*

"And Jim says nothing of what he has been doing all day," observed Mrs. Thornton, smiling on the guest, whom she had placed at her right hand. "I am sure he has been the busiest of you all."

Ah, Jim had been so, indeed, but in ways that it would have startled this innocent group to hear!

"You can bet he has!" said Ted heartily. "Take another flapjack while they're hot, Jim; and pass around the syrup, Mammy Meg. I have a regular Kilkannegan appetite to-night. When I can hustle around and make money like Jim, it will be time for me to talk. And he isn't mean about it, either. He wanted to treat me to every-

thing going this evening, mother; but I brought him here instead."

And then Mrs. Thornton's soft eyes beamed again on Jim, her "boy's friend," until the flapjack nearly choked him, and the syrup turned to bitterness in his mouth. He did not feel comfortable until the pleasant good-bys were spoken, and, with the sweet mother-voice telling him to come again, he and Ted were out of the house in the clear, free night, their skates in their arms ready for a skim on the lake.

It was bitter cold, and myriads of stars were twinkling in the dark blue vault of the sky. Jim was not given to fancying things, but it seemed to him to-night as if heaven were full of eyes, staring down on his heart and reading all its dark secrets. He felt that if he stayed with Ted five minutes more he must tell him all—all that those bright stars saw and knew.

"My dear boy!" the sweet mother-words kept echoing in his ears. When had any one called him "my dear boy" before? He had been such a good friend to Ted, she had said. And the queer, choking feeling came over Jim as he remembered; and he grew fierce and angry with himself and with Ted, with his mother—with everything, with

everybody, under those watching stars. For the dull, deadened heart and conscience were stirring, and Jim did not like the queer new pain. He would clear off from Ted and—forget.

"I can't go with you, Ted, to-night," he said suddenly, as they reached the corner. "I forgot it till this minute, but I've got an engagement for eight o'clock. I promised to meet some fellows at the show I was telling you about. If you won't go, I must."

"That's too bad," said Ted in a disappointed tone. "I thought we'd have the whole evening together. But if you can't, you can't, of course. Good-night, old fellow! Come again, as mother asked you. We'll all be glad to see you whenever you feel like dropping in."

"Come again!" muttered Jim to himself after the friends parted. "Not much! You don't catch me at any such goody-goody gathering again. Your folks ain't my sort, Mr. Teddy Thornton. But, golly! his mother was pretty and nice! 'Dear boy,' she called me. Pah! It sort of made me sick. 'Dear boy!' I guess they'll find I'm pretty dear before Master Ted is through with me," concluded this good "friend," with a grim chuckle.

All unconscious of the effect his hospitality had

produced, Ted went swinging on down the street, intending to stop for Phil Waters, who would be ready for a skate, he knew. Phil and Ted had been friends since they were in skirts together and pulled each other's long curls in baby fights. But the tumble in stocks had not hurt Phil's father, and the family had just returned from Palm Beach. Ted had been too busy to see much of his old chum of late. He now found him up in his own room, with the student's lamp lit, and the table strewn with books; while Phil, with his curly head tragically buried in his hands, was struggling with the morrow's lessons.

"I can't go out until I'm through, Ted. I'm up to my ears in conditions now. Father gave it to me hot and strong last night. Said he wouldn't stand any more loafing—I'd have to study, or cut out to his Colorado ranch and make a man of myself there. I've a mind to do it," said Phil, throwing himself back in his chair, with a sudden sparkle in his eyes. "What's the good of all this Greek and Latin, anyhow, Ted? Who wants to know about all these old fellows Paris and Priam, that have been dead a thousand years? I think I'd rather strike out for the prairies and punch cows."

"Oh, I wouldn't—not if I were you, Phil," said Ted eagerly. "I'd stick to my books. Any old tough can punch cows; but you—you've got such a chance. That's what Mr. McMann used to tell me when I got to fooling. He said college was like starting a fellow with steam up, when other boys have to cut their wood and make their fires. I suppose that's what I'll have to do now; but, if I were you, and had the chance, I'd take it. Let's see where you're stuck. Maybe I can help you."

And, as two curly heads are better than one, Paris and Priam were soon settled for the morrow; and the boys started out for the Park, where the lake, starred with electric lights, invited merry crowds of skaters.

But Ted's hour of sport seemed doomed tonight. As the boys were hurrying on their way, a sound of piteous sobbing fell on their ears; and, pausing to see whence it came, they spied a queer little wizened figure crouched in the angle of the brownstone steps they had just passed. The small head was bent hopelessly over a basket that rested on the twisted knees, and the little fellow's crooked shoulders were shaking with sobs that he could not repress.

"It's—it's Humpty!" exclaimed Ted, recogniz-

ing the little hunchback boy who sold matches and shoestrings in the neighborhood. Humpty crying!

Both boys stared in amazed sympathy. Humpty crying! Humpty, who, despite the twist in his back and the crook in his legs, hopped around as merry as a cricket, and who had a "scoop" in the match and shoestring line with all the tender householders on a wide and growing beat.

"I ain't crying," answered Humpty, swallowing his sobs, and brushing his eyes with two grimy fists as he looked up at the intruders upon his trouble. "I'm just choking mad."

"What's the matter?" asked Ted.

"That's the matter!" blurted poor Humpty, unclosing the thin, claw-like little hand and showing the bank-note clutched there. "Two dollars!" he continued, swallowing another sob with the words. "Give all the change I had for it, and it ain't no—no—good!"

"Who says so?" asked his hearers breathlessly.

"Man at the drug-store—all the men at the drug-store say I'll get locked up if I try to pass it. Dasn't go home and tell. Gran will wallop me sure."

"Who gave it to you?" asked Ted, feeling that this was tragedy indeed.

"A boy," answered Humpty, fiercely. "Gee! wouldn't I like to catch him. He came along and bought a whole dozen matches. Hadn't any change and give me this. Man at the drug-store said there's lots of the 'queer' shoved just that way."

"What—what's 'queer'?" asked Ted curiously.

"Don't you know?" laughed Phil. "It's bad money—counterfeit. Father says there are some scoundrels flooding the town with it just now. He got stuck on a V himself yesterday in market. He always likes to pick out his own turkey, and took it from a country boy. That's the rascals' trick: they send out boys and women to shove their stuff on people that don't know."

"George! that's mean, snaky sort of work!" said Ted indignantly. "I'd like to spot the chap that did Humpty here."

"You—you can't," said Humpty wofully. "The man at the drug-store says you can't catch them. They change their clothes, and there's new ones all the time, and they never strike the same place twice. But they ortn't to strike a match-boy like me, that has a crooked back and a gran what

wallops him. They ortn't to put off a whole two dollars on me."

Ted dived into his pockets, from force of habit. There were only his car tickets for the next day. Phil dived into his, and brought out a dime, the last of his week's allowance.

Humpty rose shivering, a pitiful little crooked figure, to meet gran's wrath.

"Let's go home with you, Humpty. Maybe we can stave off things," said Ted. "We'll tell the old woman she mustn't touch you; that Phil's father here, who is a lawyer, was fooled too."

"Will you?" said Humpty eagerly. "Come along, then. 'Tain't far. Gran's taking care of Mrs. Martin's house while they're in Florida. We live in the basement. The rats come out at night sometimes, but there's plenty of coal to burn, and it's fine. But we don't get no money except what I bring home, and gran will be pizen mad when she finds it all gone. Gee! it was tough! Two whole dollars!"

"Never mind, Humpty, old boy! Brace up! You'll make some more to-morrow. We all have to get our eyes opened, you know; and you'll never be caught again," said Ted cheerily, as the boys hurried on their way, turning from the quiet resi-

dential streets into the avenue, where many of the stores were still open.

Gay lights were flashing from cafés and restaurants, and the busy world was still wagging on its way. Washington's Birthday was near, and the store windows were gay with flags and bunting; while in one of them was a realistic representation of the small George, with his historic hatchet, standing beside a cherry tree that in this case was loaded with jewelled fruit, scarf-pins, rings, brooches set with monstrous diamonds; rubies, emeralds, that, under the blaze of the electric light, flashed and sparkled as if they were the real thing. A gentleman with a very hooked nose stood in the door, addressing the eager crowd that pressed around the glittering show:

"Walk in, ladies and shentlemen—walk in! Here is the most magnificent jewels ever displayed on the American continent. Bought from a great East Indian prince, ladies and shentlemen, who was obliged to sacrifice all the treasures gathered in his palace for one thousand years. Beautiful satin 'birthday badge' given to every customer. Step in, ladies and shentlemen, and choose for yourselves."

The gentleman's eloquence was not altogether

unheeded, especially as the jewels of the East Indian prince were retailing at fifty cents apiece.

Our boys, too wise to be caught by any such tawdry bait, even if they had any money to spend, were pressing on through the crowd gathered in front of the store, when Ted felt his arm clutched with a trembling little hand.

"There he is!" gasped Humpty, shaken with sudden excitement. "Catch him—oh, catch him, please! There's the boy that got my two dollars, coming out of the door!"

And, making a mad dive through the crowd, Humpty caught desperately at a rough reefer, whose wearer had just emerged from the store and turned down the street. With a sudden rude shove, the boy flung the little match merchant from him; and poor Humpty and his basket fell under the feet of the crowd, while the other lad sprang away and vanished in the pushing throng. But not—not before Ted caught a sight of his face. It was his "good friend" and evening guest, Jim.

CHAPTER IX

HUMPTY

JIM!—Jim in his rough reefer that he had pulled on in Ted's hallway not an hour ago; in his red muffler, his close-drawn cap! Jim!

Ted stood in speechless, open-mouthed amazement for a second, and then the cry that went up around him drove all other thoughts from his dazed mind.

"Stand back, stand back!" shouted a score of excited voices. "There's a boy hurt here. You are crushing the little fellow. Stand back!"

"It's Humpty! Hurt!" cried Phil; and the two boys sprang forward as the crowd parted, showing a piteous little figure writhing on the sidewalk, one thin bird-claw of a hand still clutching his empty basket, the contents of which were scattered hopelessly under careless feet.

"Oh! oh!" wailed Humpty, as Ted knelt down and lifted him, while Phil fiercely elbowed off the pushing crowd. "I'm hurt—I'm hurt so bad! He knocked me down and people stepped on me!"

"What's the matter here?" said a big police-

man, forcing his way to the spot. "I told you, Goldstein, that I couldn't have the street blocked up like this with your customers. You must make room inside or——"

"Mr. Ryan, Mr. Ryan, this is not my affair at all," said the hook-nosed gentleman excitedly. "These ladies and shentlemen will bear witness it was an accident. The boy is a cripple and slipped down."

"He didn't!" said Phil Waters indignantly. "A big bully of a boy, twice his size, knocked him down in the push."

"It's Humpty Blake, the little match-boy. Sure I know him—every one knows Humpty," said Ryan, bending pitifully over the little figure supported by Captain Ted's sturdy arm. "Are ye hurt much, Humpty, man?"

"Oh, yes, yes, Mr. Ryan, I'm hurt dreadful! Somebody stepped on me, and I've lost all my matches and shoestrings and money."

"Whisht! whisht! Never mind! We'll make it up to you to-morrow, lad. I'll take up a collection at headquarters meself. There's not a man in the force won't put his hand in his pocket to set ye up in business after a fall like this. Aisy now, and let me lift ye out of this push."

And tenderly lifting the pitiful little figure, Ryan carried him out of the pressing crowd, Ted and Phil still keeping close to their unlucky protégé.

"It was about the meanest, scurviest trick I ever saw," said Phil, still boiling with righteous indignation. "Humpty went for the scoundrel who had just put off a two-dollar counterfeit on him."

"Ah, he had?" said Ryan, flashing into new interest. "Faith and ye'll be even with that young spalpeen soon, then, Humpty, if Pat Ryan can lay eyes on him. We've orders to bring in all we can find at that little game. There's a lot of murdering young villains that are being trained for the penitentiary and gallows, and I'm thinking he's one of them."

Penitentiary and gallows! Ted heard the words like one in a dream. The bad money, the cruel shove, the quick, guilty flight! Oh, he had been mistaken! It could not have been Jim he saw in that bewildering moment, in the dazzling glare of Goldstein's electric lights—not kind-hearted, generous Jim.

"Stand down now," said Ryan, gently putting Humpty from his arms as they reached a quiet corner. "Let's see if ye're not more frightened than hurt, my little man."

But poor Humpty reeled helplessly, and would have fallen but for Ted's quick support.

"I—I can't!" he said faintly. "It—it hurts too bad to stand, Mr. Ryan."

"Then it's to the hospital ye ought to go," was the decided reply.

"No, no!" cried the little fellow in terror. "No, don't send me to the hospital. I won't go. They'll tie me up to straighten my back. Don't send me to the hospital, Mr. Ryan. I think I can walk all right."

"Off with ye, then!" said the big policeman, his decision quickened by a whistle from a neighboring cross-street. "Look out for him, boys. There's some murdering work up at the corner and I'm wanted."

And the sturdy guardian of the law dashed off at a run, while little Humpty sank back on a step near by.

"I can't," he faltered, "I feared he'd take me to the hospital. Oh, I can't even stand! But 'tain't far to gran's now. It's jest around the corner. If you two could make a lady's chair and carry me like the boys do sometimes, I'll—I'll pay you when—when I get to selling matches again——"

"Never mind the pay, Humpty. We'll take you home without that."

And, linking their hands into a lady's chair under the poor little match-boy's puny form, Ted and Phil carried him gently to the house he pointed out,—a tall, stately mansion, closed and darkened save where in one lower window there glimmered a beacon light, showing that gran was on the watch for her small breadwinner's return.

And she was indeed. Ted felt that Humpty's terror was not surprising when the basement door flew open, showing the hard-featured, angry old woman glaring on the threshold.

"Get out of this, ye spalpeens!" she cried, mistaking the lady's chair and its bearers for an untimely bit of fun. "Sure and it's a nice hour of the night, Humpty Blake, for ye to be coming home monkey-shining like this! I'll show ye that I have a hold on ye yet."

"Oh, I'm hurt, gran—I'm hurt bad!" wailed poor Humpty.

"Yes; don't scold him, Mrs. Blake," said Phil. "We had to bring him home like this because he can't walk. He has been knocked down and hurt."

"Hurt, is it—*hurt!*" fairly screeched old gran. "Murder, murder!—me boy, me poor little boy!"

And, amid wild prayers and lamentations from

the excited old woman, Humpty was brought into the warm, tidy kitchen, and laid upon the little couch that served as his bed, while Ted and Phil tried to explain matters.

"Knocked him down! Knocked a poor crooked-back cripple down!" cried gran. "Ochone, ochone! The curse of heaven will be on the villain that did it! Look—look at the bruises of him!" continued the old woman, as she took off Humpty's clothes. "Look at the murdering bruises! It's kilt entirely he is, me poor boy!"

And gran, who like many other sharp-tongued, quick-tempered old women, was now all hysterical grief and remorse, relapsed into woful cries and lamentations over poor little Humpty, who lay white and exhausted on his couch, moaning with pain.

"It's the death-stroke that's on him!" wailed gran. "He'll be gone before the morning light."

"Not a bit of it!" said Ted cheerily, as Humpty lifted his wide, frightened eyes. "Pooh! what's a little tumble and kick like that! I've had worse knock-outs at a football game; haven't you, Phil?"

"Often," answered Phil. "Red, black, and blue all over, and didn't know anything for two hours."

"You ought to have had Burly Bill Briggs and three others on top of you, like I had last Thanksgiving game!" continued Ted. "I thought I'd never get my breath again."

"Did—did they take you to a hospital?" asked Humpty faintly.

"No; but I was pretty well used up, and they had a doctor," answered Ted. "And you ought to have one too. Hadn't I better go for one, Mrs. Blake?"

"Don't—don't leave me," whispered Humpty, stretching out a trembling little hand to this cheerful friend. "Gran—gran skeers me—sometimes. Don't leave me yet!"

So Phil, taking the hint, sped away for the nearest doctor; while Ted kept his place by Humpty's side, entertaining him with graphic accounts of the bloody noses and broken shins that had followed the conflicts of Pubs and Preps on St. Elmer's campus, and wisely ignoring the contrast between the sturdy young knights of diamond and gridiron, and the frail, crippled boy gasping beside him now.

Then Phil came back with the doctor, who looked Humpty over gently and carefully, gave him something to quiet his nerves and put him to

sleep, and said he would see him again in the morning. Altogether it was twelve o'clock before Ted's unexpected duties were over, and he could hurry back home, where mama was sitting up in her pretty pink kimono watching for him. And he told her all poor little Humpty's pitiful story, suppressing only the strange fancy—that was now fading away from his mind—that the boy at Goldstein's door was Jim. Jim, who had gone to the show an hour before, to meet his friends—Jim, whose rough reefer and red muffler might have a thousand duplicates! It could not have been Jim.

So entirely had the fancy vanished that when, three days later, Jim sauntered into the office, dressed again in his own flashy style, Ted told him the whole story of Humpty's misfortune. Mr. Sharkey and Mr. Trapp were out; and, though Ted was still busy with his lawyers, the thought of the poor little match-boy would obtrude itself upon his work. Twice he had written down Humpty in mistake for Humphrey and Horace, the Christian names of two legal lights. For the doctor was looking very grave indeed over the little humpback's case. There was some sort of internal injury, how great he could not as yet say. Only Humpty's wild pleas kept him out of the

hospital; no one had the heart to send him there in the face of his frantic fears. But a visiting nurse came to see him every day. Mr. Waters and other rich gentlemen sent gran money, and everybody was very kind. Father Bryan had been to see him, too, and Sister Angela, and they talked of letting him make his First Communion, though he was only ten years old.

To Ted's account of all this Jim listened with his hands thrust deep into his great-coat pocket, and a queer, frightened look on his freckled face that Ted was too absorbed in Humpty's troubles to see.

"Do—do you mean that the little beggar is going to die?" he asked at last.

"The doctor can't tell. But Humpty isn't a beggar, Jim. He never begged a cent in his life. He has been taking care of himself ever since he was seven years old. Everybody likes him and is sorry for him. Judge Waters, Phil's father, says he'd give a hundred dollars to find the fellow that pushed Humpty down in that crowd. And Ryan, the policeman—my! but he's hot and fierce! He says if anything happens to Humpty, he'll have that boy hunted down and jailed, and worse, for it."

"Did—did the cop see him?" asked Jim breathlessly.

"No, but I did," said Ted, with a nod.

"*You!*" gasped Jim.

"It was a fellow in a reefer and a muffler just like yours," continued Ted. "Do you know, Jim, for a moment I was struck all of a heap! He looked so much like you."

"Me!" snarled Jim, suddenly showing his bulldog teeth. "What're you giving me, Ted Thornton? What sort of a dirty trick is this you're playing? What do you mean by telling lies like that?"

"Hold on there!" said Ted, starting up from his desk with blazing eyes. "I don't take talk like that from any boy, Jim Lane. I said the boy looked like you, and he *did;* but it wasn't you, I know."

"What did you say so for, then?" said Jim, his voice still shaking fiercely. "What did you go and start the cops with such a story for? That's a nice way to serve me after—after all I have done for you, Ted Thornton: getting me into a row like this!" And here Jim's outraged feelings quite overcame him, and he blubbered outright.

"O Jim, Jim, you don't understand!" said Ted, remorsefully. "I didn't go back on you. I didn't tell any cop. Just for one minute I thought it was you, and then I knew it couldn't be, Jim. You're not the sort of a fellow to do low, mean work like that. Besides, you were at the other end of town, at the show. Don't think of it any more, Jim. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

"Hello! what's the matter here?" asked Mr. Sharkey, who had quietly entered the office. "Quarreling, eh?" he said, casting one of his keen, piercing looks at the excited boys.

"Oh, no, sir!" replied Ted earnestly. "Jim misunderstood. He thought I had gone back on him, had been getting him into trouble, but it's all a mistake."

"I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Sharkey, with another keen look at Jim's face. "But look out for mistakes. They are dangerous always. Take this packet to 575 Blank Street, and wait for an answer, Thornton."

And as Ted hurried away to do his bidding, Mr. Sharkey shut the office door with a pressure of the hidden spring and turned sharply on Jim.

"Now, what's the trouble, you rascal? For there *is* trouble, I see."

And Jim's answer was a fierce oath that would have chilled gentle Mrs. Thornton's blood.

"It's that dunderhead," he said in a hoarse, shaking voice. "You've got to shut up his mouth, Mr. Sharkey, or he'll have the cops down on us all. For if they ketch me, I'll blow, Mr. Sharkey —I tell you, I'll blow."

CHAPTER X

A TRAITOR'S TRICK

MR. SHARKEY'S dark face turned an ashen gray and his eyes blazed, as he caught Jim's shoulder with a hand strong and cruel as steel.

"Do you mean to threaten me, you young cub —to threaten *me?* Why, I'll throw you out of the window if you give me another insolent word!"

Jim cowered like a whipped hound at its master's grip and tone.

"I didn't mean any harm, Mr. Sharkey. It's Ted Thornton that's going to run us all down. I put off one of your two dollar notes on a humpback match-boy the other night, and the little beggar spied me afterward in the crowd round Goldstein's store and made a grab at me. I gave him a shove and he fell down in the push and got hurt."

"Well, what is all this to me?" asked Mr. Sharkey, with the queer hiss in his set teeth.

"Maybe it ain't nothing to you, but it's a heap to me, Mr. Sharkey. The little beggar is going to

die, and there's a big row about it. Judge Waters says he will give one hundred dollars to find the boy that hurt him; and Ryan, the big cop, is swearing to hunt me down; and Ted Thornton is in with all of them. He saw me, Mr. Sharkey."

"There's ten dollars," said his employer, flinging a note upon the desk. "Take it and get out of town!"

Jim took up the note and eyed it keenly.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid! It's the real thing," said Sharkey, with a harsh laugh. "Good as gold."

"Yes, but it ain't—it ain't enough," said Jim.

"Why, you young horse-leech! I've already paid you ten times more than you were ever worth to me."

"And you want to get rid of me now?" said Jim sullenly.

"To be plain with you, my young friend, I *do*. After this last piece of work, Trapp and Sharkey prefer your room to your company."

"You forget, Mr. Sharkey" (Jim's voice shook with mingled fury and fear), "I kin blow—blow your whole business."

"And blow yourself into jail, or maybe worse,

with it," was the mocking reply. "You'd better give the police wide berth, Lane. Killing cripples is a good deal worse than any business you've done for me. They have offered one hundred dollars to find you, you say. That looks bad—pretty bad. You'd better make yourself scarce as quick as you can. That's my advice to you."

And Mr. Sharkey took his seat at his big desk and pulled out his account book, as if he had no further interest in the subject.

"You know ten dollars ain't much, Mr. Sharkey," said Jim. "It won't be nothing if I've got to leave home."

"It's all you will get here," was the unmoved reply.

"'Tain't enough," whimpered Jim; "you know 'tain't enough, Mr. Sharkey. I can't get a place or work or a job anywhere now. They'll want a recommendation—they'll want to know who I am and where I came from."

"Are you going to get out?" asked Sharkey, starting up from his chair.

"You daren't a-done this yesterday," blurted out Jim desperately. "You'd been afraid. You daren't a kicked me out like a mangy dog yesterday, Mr. Sharkey."

"No, but I dare to do it to-day because you're muzzled, you young cur! You daren't either bark or bite," said Sharkey, his dark eyes blazing wrathfully. "Take your money and go before I kick you out."

"Oh, I'll be even with you—I'll be even with you all!" muttered Jim to himself, as, cowed and frightened and furious, he slouched away through back streets, feeling for the first time in his wicked young life the desperate rage of a hunted creature. There was no home to which he could turn, no hole in which he could hide.

Like all of his kind, Jim was a very great coward at heart. Mr. Sharkey had frightened, had mastered him thoroughly; his weak head was in a daze of terror, his evil heart in a blaze of fury. All that was most fierce and wicked in him had been wakened into life. He had been kicked out, as he said, like a dog that could neither bark nor bite; for to blow on Trapp and Sharkey—to betray their evil secrets—would betray himself. And Humpty was going to die, and Judge Waters and Policeman Ryan were looking for the boy that hurt him.

Just as he reached this despairing resolve, he caught sight of Ted, bright, rosy and happy, com-

ing briskly down the street—Ted whom, in a fierce flash of unreasoning fury, he seemed to see as the cause of all his woes. Ah, if he could be even with Ted, he thought vengefully! If he could only catch him in just such a snap as this! If he could bring Ted to ruin and disgrace, too!

"Hello!" he cried; "put on the brakes a moment, Ted, can't you? You're a regular lightning express."

"I like to make time," said Ted. "I can't ever get through my work if I don't. Where are you off to, Jim? I thought I'd find you at the office when I got back. I want you to come home with me to-night, can't you?"

"Can't come," said Jim curtly. "I'm going out of town, and"—Jim's evil mind began to work quickly—"I've just about time to make my train. Did—did you get the packets?" he asked, looking at the big bulge in Ted's pocket.

"Yes," replied Ted; "got them here buttoned up tight. The man told me to be careful, for they were valuable. Well, but he's a queer duck! Had on false whiskers, I know; for one end was loose," laughed Ted. "I've been sent to him four times now, and he's always in a different place. He asked me how long I had been with Trapp and

Sharkey, and if I had caught on to the business yet, and a lot of fool questions."

A blaze like a lightning flash seemed to illumine Jim's evil mind as Ted spoke. The "snap" was *here,* at his very hand.

"Oh, the fellow is all right, I guess! But I've got to rush it, Ted. Mr. Sharkey asked me to bring him five dollars' worth of stamps before I left, but I haven't time. Would you mind to stop somewhere and buy them?"

"Not a bit," answered Ted, taking the note Jim held out to him. "Five dollars' worth of stamps, you say? I'll have to go to some big place for such a lot."

"Yes," said Jim quickly, "some big place—Varnum's or Baker's. Only hurry; Mr. Sharkey is waiting, and I must move. Good-by!"

"Good-by and good luck, old boy!" called out Ted, delighted to find that the little unpleasantness of the morning had seemingly blown over, and Jim was all right again.

And as this good friend disappeared around the corner, our Captain, unconscious of any treachery, hurried on his way to Varnum's, a huge office building, buzzing like a great hive with business. There were no drones in Varnum's; every niche

in its high-reaching walls was filled with human bees working for the honey men call gold. Lawyers, brokers, insurance offices, rose tier upon tier; while in the great central hall telephones and telegraph were flashing messages across land and seas; tickers were marking the rise and fall of the far-off markets; the last half hour's news from London and Paris stood out on huge bulletin boards. In short, all the wide, busy world seemed to find in Varnum's eye and ear and voice. In the branch post-office three brisk clerks were busy sorting the mail, while a keen-eyed old gentleman sat at a grated window selling stamps and weighing packages.

"Five dollars' worth of stamps, if you please, sir," asked Ted politely, as he took his turn at the desk.

"Two cent?" asked the old gentleman, taking the note and flashing an odd glance at it from his silver-rimmed spectacles.

"Yes, sir," answered Ted, "if you have enough."

"I don't think I have," said the gentleman, slowly turning his spectacled eyes on Ted's face, "not to fill this bill of yours, young man; but there's a gentleman here who can."

He pressed a button as he spoke; and Ted, waiting calmly for his stamps, felt a quick, firm touch on his arm.

"Come along!" said a sandy-haired personage at his side. "No use in making any row; it will only be worse for you."

"Worse for me!" echoed Ted indignantly, trying to shake off the iron grip that held him fast. "What's the matter with you? I came here to buy stamps."

"Exactly," said the gentleman, with a smile. "I know just what you came for, my young friend. And perhaps you know what I came for too." He flung open his overcoat and showed an officer's badge beneath. "You'll have to come with me and give an account of yourself and that counterfeit you tried to pass just now."

"Counterfeit!" exclaimed Ted, staring in blank dismay at the speaker. "Was that counterfeit?"

"Hush!" said the other, raising a warning finger. "Don't talk here. This way!" He pushed open a side door and led the bewildered boy into a small office room. "Now, you may be all right; for you don't look like a rascal. But there is a gang of young sharpers doing this sort of business

for big pay, and we're on the lookout for them. Honest now—it will be best for you to own up. Are you working for the Easy Money men?"

"No, sir," answered Ted indignantly. "I never heard of them before."

"Where did you get that counterfeit, then?"

"A boy gave it to me, sir," replied Ted. "He works in the same office with me—Trapp and Sharkey's; and they sent him out with five dollars to buy stamps. He met me on the street and asked me to get them, because he was in a hurry to catch a train."

"That boy was a friend of yours, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, sir! We were at college together—St. Elmer's. We were good friends."

"You're either a very honest fool, my lad, or the best liar I've seen in a professional life of twenty years," said the man dryly. "Come, now, confess! You've got a few more of those same V's stowed away in your pockets."

"I haven't, then!" said Ted, flushing with honest indignation. "Do you take me for such a mean scoundrel as that?"

"No use in flaring up," said the officer. "Just turn out your pockets and let us see."

But Ted's cheek and eye flamed indeed now.

The blood of the old Captain who fought the Red Coats at Dorchester Heights was at a boil.

Strong in his truth and innocence, Captain Ted, who had held his own hitherto in fair-fought fields, forgot that he had been working in unknown ways; forgot that it was the iron grip of the law that was upon his shoulder; forgot that he was only a helpless boy. He tore himself away from the officer's hold and stood against the wall of the room, at bay.

"I won't!" he said hotly, every fiber of his young frame trembling with boyish wrath. "Keep your hands off me, I tell you, or I'll knock you down!"

But, alas for this mad defiance! Captain Ted was suddenly caught in a practised grip that no football skill could meet.

"Showing your teeth at last, are you, my innocent?" said Officer Grimes, with a laugh. "Here, Toby! Toby!" he called; and a big black man appeared from an inner door. "Hold on to this young chap while I peel him and see what he is carrying."

And, quivering with rage and mortification, our Captain found himself helpless in big Toby's brawny grasp, while Officer Grimes stripped him

of overcoat, jacket and vest, and proceeded to search them thoroughly. His lunch sandwich, his jackknife, his car tickets, his beads (that he had promised Father Bolton always to carry), the letter to Mr. John Jarvis returned from the post office, little Bob's fountain pen—all were tumbled ruthlessly on the floor; while Mr. Grimes seized Mr. Sharkey's packets and tore them open, with a flashing eye and eager hand.

"Eureka!" he cried. "By George, you nearly played your game to beat me, you young sharper! One thousand dollars in counterfeit money in your pocket—one thousand dollars!"

CHAPTER XI

MISS DOLLY AND "JACK" INVOLVED

ONE thousand dollars counterfeit in his pocket! One thousand dollars, for which Mr. Sharkey had sent him! Like the fiery flash that rends the black storm-cloud, revelation burst upon Captain Ted. Sharkey and Trapp, the Bean Stalk, the queer man with the false whiskers, Jim at Goldstein's door—he saw them all in the flaming light. He had been the dupe, the tool, the victim of designing villains; had been caught in a cruel trap and left to bear the ignominy and shame.

He stood quivering in every nerve under the shock, unable to speak a word in his own defence, as the grinning Toby held him firmly in his black grip, and Officer Grimes proceeded triumphantly with his investigation, while he kept up a running fire on the hapless prisoner.

"One thousand dollars, packed in fives and twos and ones, ready for circulation where no questions are likely to be asked! And this is the young innocent who never heard of the Easy Money Men, who didn't know a counterfeit when he

passed it, who got this last V from a college mate to buy stamps! Lord! Lord!—and looking into my face with eyes like a two-year-old baby, while he ripped out his lies faster than a horse marine! You came nearer fooling me, young man, than any person that has tried his little game on Jack Grimes for twenty years. 'Pon my soul, if you hadn't shown fight so quick, I believe I'd have let you go."

There was no answer. Pale and wide-eyed with horror, Captain Ted stood apparently in the silence of detected guilt. His mother—his dear, dainty, gentle mother—Kit, Nell, Aunt Fan, all the dear ones at home! Oh, what would they think? What would they say to this awful disgrace? And it would get in the papers perhaps; it would reach St. Elmer's, the boys, old Brother Michael, Father Bolton! Our poor young Captain's thought could go no further; his brain reeled before the yawning pit of darkness and despair.

"One thousand dollars!" went on Officer Grimes, with grim professional satisfaction. "Let us see what other documents you are carrying around, young man."

Presently the speaker pounced upon the letter directed to Mr. John Jarvis, Dunmore.

"More notes, you rascal!" he said, pulling out the railroad fare, which Ted had been carrying untouched, despite all the financial pressure upon him in these troubled weeks.

"Don't—don't touch that! That isn't mine," said the boy, forcing speech at last through his dry lips.

"I dare swear it isn't!" answered Mr. Grimes, as he coolly proceeded to read the letter that had enclosed the money. It was carefully penned, according to St. Elmer's best style, in a clear schoolboy hand:

"MR. JOHN JARVIS.

DEAR SIR:—I enclose the money you were kind enough to pay for my ticket to New York, and hope it will reach you in safety. This is the second letter I have sent to the address you gave me; the first was returned to me. Please remember me to little Miss Dolly. I hope she is happy and well. I remain, with thanks,

Very sincerely yours,

THEODORE B. THORNTON, JR.

MR. JOHN JARVIS,
Dunmore."

Officer Grimes stared at this letter in new perplexity.

"Jarvis!" he repeated; "John Jarvis! That's

a big name for you to be monkeying with, young man! Railroad fare! Miss Dolly! There is some deviltry behind this, I haven't a doubt!"

"Miss Dolly is Colonel John Jarvis' little girl, sah," explained Toby. "I lived dar as butler 'fore he got me dis place, and I knows. Dar is some sort of sarcomlocution bout dat letter, sure."

"He is in his office upstairs and we'll find out," said Mr. Grimes.

"Don't—don't call him! I—I will tell you all about it!" cried Ted, in an agony of shame at the thought of being seen in such a place, in such a plight. "He doesn't know me. He wouldn't understand."

"Oh, he wouldn't? Don't flatter yourself that you've got all the wits in the world, youngster," said Mr. Grimes, dryly. "As for your explanations, you may as well keep them to yourself, for they won't go down. Here, Toby, I'll look out for this young gentleman. Do you see these?"—and the officer drew a light pair of handcuffs from his pocket. "The first kick you make, on go these bracelets; so keep quiet. Now, Toby, step upstairs, give my card to the Colonel, and tell him he is wanted on very special business down here."

* * * * *

Colonel John Jarvis, retired army officer, stock-broker, mine operator, bank president, and multi-millionaire, had a visitor this morning who was engrossing his time and attention to the serious detriment of daily business. Perched upon the big mahogany desk in the middle of his private office, and prattling through his long-distance telephone with "grandma," about two hundred miles away, was a small young lady in fur and feathers who had come to town with "Jack" to-day to see the play "Beauty and the Beast," and lunch, as such lucky fairies may even in midwinter, upon strawberries and cream.

"Now, then, you've had your talk with grandma. Jump down, Dolly dear, and look at your picture paper," said Jack, turning to a big stack of mail waiting him. "You said you'd be very quiet, you know."

"And I will—I will," said that young lady as Jack jumped her to the floor. "I'll take off my hat and coat and sit in this big window and look out, Jack. I'd rather look at people than pictures." And with a deft touch Miss Dolly emerged from fur and feathers, a dainty little, golden-haired figure all in white. "Oh, isn't there a lot of people

in the world!" she murmured softly as she sank in the broad window-seat. "Do you suppose they all have houses to live in and clothes and shoes and—and dinners, Jack?"

"Dolly dear, you promised to let me read my letters!" was the gentle protest.

"And I will. I'm going to be just as quiet as a mouse now, Jack."

And the little lady pressed her pretty, tip-tilted nose against the window-pane, and for about sixty seconds remained in silent contemplation of the busy scene without. Then—for Miss Dolly's sweet little silver tongue could not remain still any longer—she began to comment softly to herself on the passing show.

"Oh, poor man! He has only one leg and has to walk on crutches. What a pity! And there's a lady with a fur coat just like Miss Burnham's! And isn't that a nice little girl in that red bonnet? I don't like red bonnets myself; but she looks so pretty and warm! And that big boy taking care of her is her brother, I guess. Oh, it must be nice to have a big boy brother! I wish Jack would get one for me."

"What must Jack get for you, pet?" All his interest in the news from his Arizona gold mine

could not deafen Jack to the wistful note in that silvery little voice.

"I wish you would get me a big boy brother, Jack."

"A brother?" was the somewhat surprised reply.

"A real nice one," continued Miss Dolly, who was accustomed to find her slightest wish Jack's law. "A nice, straight, clean brother, with brown eyes and curly hair, like the boy that took me on his shoulder and carried me out of the crowd at the depot."

"And made his railroad fare out of me by it!" laughed her father, as he took up another letter. "I thought I would hear from that young fellow, he seemed such an honest, gentlemanly little chap; but I suppose that would be expecting too much of the average boy."

"His name wasn't 'average,' Jack," corrected Miss Dolly. "It was Teddy. It was such a nice, easy name I have always remembered it. I wish you could get me a big brother just like Teddy, Jack. Do they cost very much?"

"Well, yes, generally they do, my golden locks!"

"More than gray ponies?" asked Miss Dolly, anxiously.

"Considerably more, and are usually ten times the trouble to manage. Wouldn't a nice girl sister be a better investment?" inquired Jack, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Oh, no!" answered Miss Dolly, most decidedly, "no, indeed, Jack; I don't want a sister at all. She would wear my ribbons and pull my curls and take my dolls, and sit on your knee in the evening, and go to sleep in your arms like I do. Oh, I wouldn't have a sister for anything! Please don't ever buy one, Jack."

"Well, I won't," laughed her father. "We'll compromise on the gray pony—a nice, gentle little fellow, with silver mane and tail, and a canter easy as a rocking-chair. What rides we shall take together over the hills of Dunmore!"

"Oh, yes; that will be splendid, Jack! Only I'm sorry—sorry boys cost so much! I'd like——"

"Well, what is it?" asked the gentleman rather sharply as his secretary broke in upon this pleasant conversation. "I'm not half through this mail yet, Carter."

"It isn't that, sir," answered Carter. "I'm sorry

to interrupt you; but Toby is out here with a card from Officer Grimes. It seems there's some trouble downstairs and he asks that you will come down."

"I come down!" echoed the gentleman. "What in thunder have I to do with Grimes or his troubles? Send Toby in here and let me understand what the fellow means."

And Toby was admitted, bowing and grinning to his old master and young mistress delightedly.

"Sorry to obtrude on you, Colonel; but dis hyah trouble is very serious and sanctimonious, sah. Mr. Grimes has cocht a desput young debbil, his pockets all stuffed wif counterfeit dollars—thousands of 'em—and wif a letter dressed to you, sah, stuffed wif dem too."

"A letter to me—to *me?*" exclaimed the Colonel, fiercely. "Where—from whom?"

"Dat is whar de trepidation comes in, sah," answered Toby. "Mr. Grimes, he don't know what debbilment it might mean. He'd like you to come down and dessicate de matter yo'self."

"I most certainly will," replied the gentleman, rising excitedly. "Dolly dear, I have to go downstairs for a moment. Stay here quietly until I get back. Carter!" calling to his secretary through the

half-open door, "I leave little Miss Jarvis to your good offices until my return. A letter to me? The young scoundrel!" continued the Colonel as he hurried down the wide hall to the elevator. "I don't know what it can mean."

"It's 'spicious, very, sah," said Toby, shaking his head. "Dat young debbil he fought—fought Mr. Grimes like a wildcat, but he seemed monstrous feered of you. He begged not to see you, sah. And dar was delusions to Miss Dolly in de letter, too, sah."

To Dolly—Dolly! Now indeed the Colonel's cheek paled beneath the bronze. Like all strong, fearless, successful men, he had enemies, he knew —enemies who would not hesitate to strike at him in the dark. Grimes was a keen, wary officer who did not take alarm lightly. What secret had he wrested from this young rascal's hold? Great Heaven! if it was threat of peril to Dolly, the apple of his eye, the core of his heart!

There was thunder on Colonel John Jarvis' brow and lightning in his gaze as he entered the room into which Toby led, and found himself face to face with Grimes standing in watchful triumph over his prisoner.

And then the irate Colonel paused, amazed,

bewildered, as his glance fell on Toby's "desput young debbil." Pale, wide-eyed, dishevelled, his clothes flung in a heap upon the floor, his white shirt sleeve split to the shoulder in his struggle, his brown curls falling in damp disorder about a fair, young, innocent, despairing face—who was it lifting those imploring eyes to Dolly's father? Where had he seen this boy before?

CHAPTER XII

A FRIEND IN NEED

"You must excuse the liberty I have taken in calling you down here, Colonel Jarvis; but this is a matter that requires your personal attention. This young rascal, whom I have just caught loaded with counterfeit bills, had a letter, enclosing six dollars, addressed to you."

The gentleman took the letter, stared at it blankly for a moment, and then light burst upon him.

"Good Lord," he blurted out to Ted, "I knew I had seen you somewhere before, my boy! You're Dolly's Teddy!"

"Ye-es, sir," faltered Ted; and then the tone, the name, the remembrance it brought, proved nearly too much for our Captain's youthful manhood.

Dolly's father caught the pitiful tremor of the boyish lip.

"What the thunder and lightning [and a great many other things, for the Colonel had fought on the plains and learned very vigorous speech] does

this mean, Grimes? Why the—[another old soldier's outburst] are you holding up a boy like this? I know him. This letter is all right. And it proves him an honest, truthful little gentleman. It ought to have reached me long ago, returning some money I lent him; but I gave him the wrong card—my residence, not my business address—and there's no post-office at Dunmore. You're all off the track, Grimes, this time sure."

"Perhaps so, Colonel," said Mr. Grimes dryly. "Still it remains for you and the 'honest little gentleman' to explain what he was doing with $1000 in counterfeit bills in his pocket, and why he was ready to knock down an officer of the law."

"Oh, I didn't know—I didn't understand!" interposed Captain Ted, finding speech at last, under the kind, clear gaze of the Colonel's eyes. "If you will hear—if you will believe me, sir!"—and again the boyish lip and tone quivered in a way that went to the Colonel's big father-heart.

"You can't believe a word he says, I warn you, Colonel," said Grimes. "He came very near fooling me."

"I'll risk the 'fooling,'" observed the Colonel, curtly. "Go on, my lad. What were you doing with that money in your pocket to-day?"

"I was fooled with it, sir," continued Ted bitterly; "I've been fooled straight through." And then, feeling at last that he had the ear of justice, our Captain told his story with a simple, boyish directness that was convincing even to so professional a critic as Officer Grimes.

"How long have you been working for these scoundrels?" cross-questioned the Colonel.

"Not quite two weeks, sir. And, you see, we needed money so much to buy groceries and coal and everything. And there was no one but me."

"I see," said the Colonel; "yes, my boy, I see. And did you ever carry bad money for them before?"

"I don't know, sir," answered Ted frankly. "I've been sent to the same man for packets like this several times, but I can't say what was in them. He was queer—they all were queer. I see it now. The list of lawyers was no good to them. It was just a trick to keep me and fool me, and —and ruin me forever." Again the young voice broke, and the old soldier's heart went out to this defeated comrade in a burst of tenderness and sympathy.

"Ruin you? Not a bit of it—not a bit!" he said, clapping Ted heartily on the shoulder. "Of course

it's none of my business to meddle with yours, Grimes," continued the Colonel; "but if you'll leave this young gentleman to me I'll be responsible for his appearance whenever and wherever you want him, while you turn your attention to Messrs. Sharkey and Trapp as rapidly as possible."

"I will, sir—I will," said Mr. Grimes, eagerly. "I'll look into that rascally business right away."

But it was too late when Officer Grimes, armed with all his powers, reached the top of the Bean Stalk. Its wicked giants had disappeared. The locked office was burst open. Some big dummy account-books, Ted's list of lawyers, a number of empty bottles and cigar boxes, and several worn packs of cards were found to be the only assets of the firm.

Ted remembered afterward having caught a fleeting glimpse of Mr. Trapp's red face and flashing scarf-pin as he entered Varnum's on his fateful errand. Some wireless warning must have reached these sharpers, who were doubtless always ready for rapid transit; for, despite all Mr. Grimes' professional efforts to discover them, Ted's late employers seemed to have vanished

into air. But the vigorous inquiry instituted at the Bean Stalk proved Messrs. Sharkey and Trapp to be a pair of rascals, who, under various names and by various methods, had long defied the law. Their last enterprise had been most successful. None guessed that Trapp and Sharkey, in their shiny, newly painted office in the top of the Bean Stalk, were in reality the "Easy Money Men" who were flooding the town with counterfeit bills manufactured to their order, and sending out keen-witted young scamps to pass this money on the innocent and unsuspicious. But all this came out later. All our brave young Captain knew to-day was that a kind, strong, fatherly hand had lifted him from disgrace and defeat into honor and safety again.

For Ted, once that he had found his wits and voice, could give "references" satisfactory even to Mr. Grimes—Judge Waters, Father Bolton, a score of the friends who were still sending jelly and flowers to "dad's" sick room, unconscious of the brave fight our fourteen-year-old Captain was making with an unknown world for his helpless family.

Colonel Jarvis, used to the survey of battlefields, took in the situation with a practised eye, and felt

that little Miss Dolly was, as usual, *right:* that Teddy was just the straight, clean, big boy brother that she wanted.

"Get into your jacket, my lad, and brace up. You're all right, and Dolly is upstairs and will be glad to see you."

And when Captain Ted, restored by the brisk military methods learned in St. Elmer's dormitory, to his trig, dapper self again, appeared at "Jack's" side, Miss Dolly could scarcely believe her own bright eyes.

"It's—it's Teddy!" she cried breathlessly. "O Jack, where—where did you find him?"

"Downstairs," laughed her father. "When does your mother expect you home, my boy?"

"Oh, not until six o'clock, sir!"

"I've got work for you, then," said the Colonel. "I have a stockholders' meeting this afternoon that I don't want to miss, and my day is pretty well broken up already. Can you play big brother to this young lady of mine this afternoon?"

"Oh, yes, yes!—won't you, Teddy, please?" said Miss Dolly delightedly.

"I will only be too glad, sir," said Ted, feeling, with a warm, grateful throb at his heart, that this

was the greatest mark of confidence "Jack" could bestow upon him.

"All right, then!" The Colonel drew out the railroad fare Ted's letter had returned to him. "Pocket that again, and don't spare it this time. Luncheon at Martini's, Dolly; and remember strawberries and cream don't touch a big brother's back tooth. He'll want roast turkey and cranberry sauce and a regular Christmas dinner. And here are the box tickets for the matinée, Teddy. I don't trust Dolly in the general crush. Take a cab afterward and bring her to the Grosvenor. You will find me there, and I'll talk to you again at our leisure."

And then what a gala afternoon it was for Captain Ted, after his morning of defeat and disgrace! For "big boy brother" was no new rôle to Ted. He had been playing it well and lovingly all his young life. And Miss Dolly, who had been playing fairy princess all *her* life, understood that rôle, too.

Such a luncheon as they had, in a beautiful room bowered with palms, a fountain sparkling in its great central court, and music playing in the upper gallery! Ted, who had kept his boyish appetite down of late in his new consciousness of butcher's

and baker's bills, felt that never before, even after the Thanksgiving game at St. Elmer's, had roast turkey and cranberry sauce tasted like this. The dessert, which his fairy hostess ordered, consisted of ices in the shape of roses and lilies, cakes crusted two inches deep with chocolate, strawberries, and cream.

Then, armed with a box of French bonbons, which Miss Dolly assured him was a necessary part of the performance, they went to the matinée. And Ted, who in his best days had only crowded in with other boys in the push, found himself ushered into a crimson curtained box, where he and Dolly could sink into soft velvet-cushioned chairs and take their ease, though the house was packed from the roof to floor with less fortunate every-day mortals.

Even our young Captain, who had given up the fairy drama several years ago, was held breathless with delight by the gorgeous spectacle of the palace and garden to which fair Beauty went in filial sacrifice. But when the Beast appeared, with a preliminary roar that made his juvenile audience quake, his glaring electric eyes and open mouth were really too much for Dolly, and she sprang from her cushioned chair and flew trem-

bling to her big boy brother's arms. But the Beast proved to be a most amiable one, as all students of the story know; and when at the last grand transformation scene, in a blaze of colored light he emerged from his leathery hide, a young Prince in golden armor, one really felt a thrill of regret that he had gone. It seemed a pity that such a friendly monster could not be transferred in all his native ugliness to the Zoo, to be fed upon cookies and peanuts by little Beauties forever.

Altogether, Ted passed such a delightful afternoon that the color came back to his cheeks and the light to his eye, and he almost recovered from the shock of the morning—*almost* but not entirely. The lightning flash of horror that had showed him the danger, the peril, the treachery into which he had so unconsciously ventured could never be forgotten. It had left a mark on his young soul which could not be erased. Our Captain's eyes had been opened. He could never believe and trust so unquestioningly again. He had found there was no umpire on Life's campus to watch for "fouls"; he must look out for himself.

"This young man won't be trapped easily

again," thought Colonel Jarvis, as he caught the new expression on Ted's face when they had their promised talk together that evening. "You'll want to go to work again, my boy, of course?" said the Colonel.

"Oh, yes, sir!—only I'll be very careful this time, you may be sure. I'm willing to do anything. I understand now that I don't know very much about business, or I could not have been so easily fooled; but I might drive a wagon, or be a messenger boy, or collect bills—anything to help mother until dad is well again."

"When does the doctor think that will be?"

"He can't say, sir. He really doesn't know. He thinks if father could get out in the country somewhere, or on the salt water, it might do him good. But—but we can't go."

"We will see about that," said the Colonel, quickly.

Ted's cheek flushed with honest pride.

"Oh, thank you, sir! But I didn't mean—that. We couldn't—we wouldn't take help, sir."

"Of course not—of course not!" said Dolly's father hurriedly. "I was thinking of another job for you—one that would take you and your father out of town."

The Colonel cast a keen glance at the boyish face that wore to-day the old great-grandfather look of sturdy strength, and felt that this was just the sort of boy he would have liked to call his own. And then he asked suddenly:

"Are you afraid of ghosts, Teddy?"

CHAPTER XIII

A BOLD MOVE

"AFRAID of ghosts!" laughed Ted. "Why, no, sir! I don't believe in them."

"Neither do I," observed the Colonel, who was leaning back in a big armchair in his private parlor, puffing comfortably at his cigar.

"Nevertheless, my boy," he continued, "I'm having lots of trouble with ghosts just now. I have a fine old place on the seashore about fifty miles from here. I bought it at a forced sale six years ago, and it's a dead weight on my hands and pocket. No one will buy, rent, or even live there, on account of its ghosts. All rank nonsense, of course; but it's nonsense that is costing me about three thousand a year in lost rent, repairs, taxes, and destruction generally. Now, I'm willing to give the house rent free and fifty dollars a month to any one that will go there and oust those ghosts and prove there's nothing in them. Plenty of sensible people would take me up; but Heron Hall is a lonely place, and sensible people are generally making more than fifty dollars a month, and can't

afford to move out of town to get the job. If I can once prove that a respectable family lived in the house for six months, my ghost will be laid forever. It's just the sort of place your father wants—sea breezes and sunshine, milk, oysters, fish, for the asking almost. Now, if you and your little mother have the pluck to try it, Heron Hall is yours for as long as you choose to stay."

"O sir, we have—we have!" replied Ted, his face kindling. "Mother would do anything to help dad get well. And—and," continued Ted, his brown eyes brightening as the way seemed to open before him, "we could rent our house furnished. Aunt Fan knows a lady that will take it, if we want to give it up. O sir, how very good you are!"

"Good! Not at all. Remember the ghosts. It's a fair business arrangement that will save me several thousands a year, if you can put it through. Talk to your mother about it, and then come to me to-morrow and let me know what you decide. I will have the place heated and furbished up a little, and you can have possession at once."

Teddy talked it over with "little mother" that night long and late. There was a great deal to

talk over, as we can guess. Poor Mrs. Thornton was struck well-nigh speechless with dismay at the morning's happenings. After the peril into which her boy had been betrayed, Colonel Jarvis' offer seemed most opportune. Ghosts were indeed shadowy, harmless things in comparison with such villains as Trapp and Sharkey, such treacherous friends as Jim Lane.

"We are not afraid of the dead, dear. It is only the wicked living that can do us harm. And your father—your dear, dear father—it is just what he needs to give him back health, strength, life again. Oh, let us go, Teddy—let us go at once!"

And so the matter was settled in Colonel Jarvis' brisk, energetic way. Aunt Fan's friend took the Thornton home just as it stood, and the "cobwebs" of rent and coal bills were cleared away effectually; while Aunt Fan, loving and faithful despite her croaking, insisted upon closing up her own little apartment and going along, as she dolefully remarked, "to see the last of poor brother." Mammy Meg, who, having a banshee in the family, was used to ghostly ways, said she 'wouldn't be druv from her childher by any American ghost that ever walked."

Colonel Jarvis insisted upon paying Ted's first

month's salary in advance, which simplified financial matters greatly. So one fine morning in early March found our Captain marshaling his domestic forces on the deck of the steamboat which, by special arrangement to-day, was to stop at usually unnoticed Heron Point. Dad, who had been lifted in the strong arms of "Toby" and Judge Waters' "Jeff" from house to carriage, and from carriage to his big rolling chair, sat at ease on the lower deck, wrapped in steamer rugs and lap robes, looking around him with dreamy eyes that seemed bewildered instead of brightened by the changing scene. Mama, a pretty flush of excitement on her cheek, was fluttering anxiously at his side. Aunt Fan and Mammy Meg were watching the transportation of the trunks, boxes, bundles, and barrels of household necessities; while Kit and Nell were striving to repress their exuberant spirits into the proper dignity of young lady travelers; and little Rick and Bowser were disporting themselves about the boat without any repression at all.

Ted, as became the leader of the expedition, was everywhere—now striving to rouse dad's interest in the scenes about him; now cheering the little mother, who was somewhat shaken by the

brisk uprooting of her family tree; now reassuring Aunt Fan, who was confident that two trunks had been left on the wharf, and that dad would have another stroke from all this excitement; and now seizing little Rick's reefer just as he was about to plunge over the deck rail, in his wild dismay at seeing old Bowser, forgetful of his years, jump overboard for a swim.

So bewildering were Captain Ted's responsibilities that time passed unnoticed, and he was startled to hear the hoarse shout, "All off for Heron Point!" as the boat slowed up by a long, narrow reef jutting out into the waves. Then came the disembarking, aided by the good-natured officers of the boat, who had dad rolled safely over the gangway to the rude wharf beyond; while busy hands dumped all the household effects, leaving Ted, like "one of the early settlers" pictured in colonial history, "stranded on a wild and unknown shore." A few fishermen's cottages dotted the lower beach; away beyond rose the sand, thrown up into cliffs and battlements by the sea and wind until it seemed a great frowning fortress forbidding all advance. Not a living creature was in sight but a long, lean dog, who, at sight of Bowser dripping from his swim, scuttled back to one of

the cabin doors and stood there, barking hoarse defiance to the intruders.

"Where is the house?" asked the little mother, looking around anxiously.

"It is cold, dear—it is very cold!" murmured dad, shivering despite his wrappings in the keen March air.

"Poor, dear brother, this will be his death!" said Aunt Fan despairingly. "We've got off at the wrong place, I know, Laura. There's no house here."

"And we're all shipwrecked on the shore," said little Rick gleefully. "Let's make a fire. Bowser, bring some sticks. Sticks, old fellow, sticks!"

"Oh, wait, wait!" said Kit. "Here comes something! It's a long cart with two cows."

"Cows? You mean oxen, goosie! And that's our man, I guess," said Captain Ted, in great relief, as he saw his reinforcements approaching. "Colonel Jarvis said there would be some one to meet the boat. Halloo there, if you come from Heron Hall! Get a move on you, my friend! We can't stay here until night."

"This here ain't no steam-engine, sonny," said the driver, as his wagon slowly lumbered up to

the waiting group. "What! you all be goin' up to the Hall? Lordy!"—and the speaker paused in open-mouthed silence, more expressive than words.

"Yes, and we want to get there mighty quick, too. How far is it?"

"Jest up behind the hill thar," said the man, with a nod at the battlements behind him.

"How do you get up there?" asked Ted anxiously.

"How do I git up?" repeated the other, slowly turning the quid of tobacco in his mouth, as he pondered over the question. "Why, I git up, sonny, jest the same way I come down."

"Then, mother, you and Aunt Fan and the girls pile in the ox-cart, and I'll push up father in his chair behind you. Mammy Meg and Rick will stand by all this truck of ours for another load."

And so the party advanced. The heights, so forbidding, proved easy traveling, after all; for Si Lynn, as the driver informed them he was called, and his patient steeds knew the road, that wound through curves and ridges in the sand dunes until it led into a belt of pines, amid which rose the brown gables of a sturdy old mansion that stood about a quarter of a mile from the shore. It had

once been a home of wealth and taste; skilful gardening had made velvety stretches of lawn and terrace about it even in these sandy wastes, and ivy wreathed its gables and pillars, while its south portico was glassed against the winds and storms.

"Oh, what a fine old place!" exclaimed Mrs. Thornton in delighted surprise, as the ox-cart turned in a rusty iron gateway and passed up a graveled carriage way to the wide pillared porch.

"Yes'm," answered Si, slowly flicking his whip over the off steer. "It be a fine place in the *daytime,* ma'am. I run the farm for Colonel Jarvis —cows and chickens and truck garden, and everything. He's a fine man. Thar ain't nothin' me and my old woman wouldn't do for the Colonel except take care of Heron Hall at night. But the old woman has been up here cleanin' and fixin' for the last two weeks, 'cordin' to the Colonel's orders, and I hope you'll find things all right."

And they did indeed. It was truly a home that seemed to welcome our travelers in these storm-swept wastes. Colonel Jarvis had made it ready for them with kind and generous care. The floors were waxed and polished; the quaint diamond panes of the windows shone crystal clear; the old-fashioned mahogany furniture winked back the

glow of the wood fires leaping and cracking in the big chimney-places.

When Ted wheeled dad into the broad central hall, and looked around him at the glow, the warmth, the comfort on every side, he felt that he had struck good luck this time without mistake.

"Bring your father in here, dear!" said "little mother," in a flutter of delight. "This lovely south room will just suit him. He can be rolled out on the porch every day. Oh, it's just what the doctor wanted for him! You couldn't have found a better place if we had a million dollars, Teddy dear!"

"And, O Ted, have you seen the drawing-room?" murmured Kit in a tone of awe. "It's just splendid. Satin curtains and mirrors and all sorts of queer, beautiful things! It's finer than Judge Waters'."

"And mama says we can choose our own room," said little Nell breathlessly. "O Kit, let us take the pretty one with rosebud stuff over the beds and curtains and chairs!"

"China with a crest on it!" exclaimed Aunt Fan, as she went on her tour of inspection around the dining-room and library. "A white heron, and family portraits at least two hundred years old,

by their dress. I hope it's all right, but I feel there's some dreadful mystery about a place left like this. I only hope we all won't be murdered in our beds."

"The ould kitchen below is tight as a drum, ma'am; and wood and coal enough to last all the year," reported Mammy Meg; "and the man says he is to furnish milk and cream from our own cows without pay, and there's twenty fine layin' hens in the chicken house beyant. It's full and plenty of good things ye'll have for the master now."

Little Rick caught the only warning note in the chorus of delight.

"I say, sonny," called old Si, as he drove slowly past the lawn where Bowser and his young master were racing and tumbling in the sunshine, "better keep that thar dog of yourn close after night."

"Why?" asked little Rick breathlessly. "What is going to hurt him?"

"Dunno," answered Si; "only 'tain't healthy for dogs around here at night. I've lost three—found 'em dead in the mornin'. Now I keep 'em indoors. You better keep yourn indoors, too."

CHAPTER XIV

HERON HALL

IT WAS a merry afternoon for the young Thorntons at Heron Hall. There was so much to see, so many wonderful things to discover, in their new home! "Little Mother" busied herself coddling dad, who seemed somewhat tired and bewildered by his journey. Aunt Fan, who believed in young people making themselves useful, kept Kit and Nell hard at work unpacking trunks and boxes, and filling the great old-fashioned wardrobes and queer, glass-knobbed bureau drawers. Mammy Meg was downstairs getting things to rights in the great, oak-raftered kitchen, where a fine new range was doing its best to fill a chimney-place big enough to roast an ox.

After Ted had knocked the heads out of barrels and the lids from boxes, and little Rick, in his effort to help, had turned over the vinegar jug and broken half a dozen kitchen plates, and Bowser had dashed off with dad's lamb chops, under the impression that they were his share of the picnic, there seemed nothing particular for boys or dogs

to do except, as Aunt Fan sharply suggested, "to get out of the way."

So they "got out" into the golden sunshine, that seemed already to have the glad radiance and warmth of spring, the boys rambling around lawn and garden and chicken-yard; while Bowser nosed curiously about bushes and outhouses, after the manner of wise old dogs when they are trying to study out the puzzling ways of men. Why he had been ousted from his comfortable hearth-rug in the Thornton library and brought over strange, watery ways to this new home, Bowser could not exactly understand, and he was trying his best to find out.

But in his young master's mind there was no doubt about the wisdom of this move. Heron Hall, standing broad and stately in the golden sunshine, the ocean breeze sweeping up from its wave-washed shore, its lawns and gardens and fields stretching far back into the green uplands, was all he could ask.

"Golly, it's a fine place, Rick!" said Ted, pausing, as they passed out of the wide iron gate, to look back at his new domain. "I didn't think we'd strike anything like this."

"I didn't, either," answered his small brother.

"Let us stay here always, Ted. Don't let's go home any more."

"Oh, we can't!" said Ted. "There is no church, no school—nothing for boys and girls, Rick. You'd grow up into a regular hoodlum down here. We came only to get dad all right, and then we will go home again. But we shall have a good six months of it—all spring and all summer. And mother said I can have Phil Waters and Hal Benson and some other fellows down here; and we'll see rousing times, boating and fishing and bathing."

"And can't I go, too, Ted?" asked little Rick.

"When I take you," answered Ted, suddenly aroused to the responsibilities of his position. "But don't let me catch you boating or bathing by yourself. I'm in charge of this family down here, and I don't want you gobbled up by sharks."

They had followed, as they talked, the narrow track that led over the sand hills, and were now on the beach. The tide was coming in; already the low wharf on which they had landed this morning was under water, and the waves were leaping in white foam-wreaths higher and higher upon the sands.

A fisher boat had been pulled far up for repairs,

and a rough-bearded old man sat upon it calking a leak.

"O Ted, look, look!" called little Rick excitedly. "The ocean's broke loose! It's coming over the wharf and shore and everything. Will it get up to Heron Hall?"

"No," laughed his brother. "It's only the tide coming in, goosie! Does it rise very high?" he asked of the man in the boat.

"In rough weather, pretty high. I've seen it on a level with them sand hills," answered the other, nodding to the ridges behind. "But it ain't hurtin' nothin' or nobody to-day. You needn't skeer, little boy."

"Pretty wild bit of shore sometimes, I guess," said Ted sociably.

"You'd say so, I reckon, if you seen it in a storm," replied the other. "Thar ain't no wusser stretch along this whole coast. But luckily thar's nobody got much business around Heron Point since the old Squire went to the dogs about ten years ago."

"Went to the dogs? How?" asked Ted, seating himself on the edge of the boat, while Rick and Bowser started for a race on the sands, at a safe distance from the advancing tide.

"You folks any kin to the Denhams?" asked the old man, cautiously.

"No—never heard of them before. Who were they?"

"Never heard of the Denhams? Lord! Lord!" exclaimed the other, staring blankly as if Ted had acknowledged ignorance of Christopher Columbus or George Washington. "I thought everybody knew about the Denhams. They owned all along this point, and fur back into the hills, more years than I can remember. They was the biggest and the richest and the highest-headed family on this shore. Soldiers and sailors and jedges and preachers, and everything great. Never heard of the Denhams? Why, whar was you raised, younker?"

"Oh, some distance off!" answered Ted. "We're strangers here, you see—just come down for a while on account of father's health. And the Denhams owned Heron Hall?" he asked, curious to hear the story of the old home.

"Nobody else ever did, and folks say that nobody else ever will," was the answer. "You can see by the pictures how grand and big and stiff they were—Miss Alicia and Miss Eleanor and Miss Rhody, and the Jedge and the Captain, and

old General Denham in his regimentals, and the Squire when he was young and good-lookin'; and all of them so straight and proud and uppish in their gold frames lookin' down on the ornary folks that was just dust for 'em to tread. I heard say that the women over here warn't good enough for the Denhams, and they hed to cross the water to find their wives. But thar was a bad streak in them, grand and great as they were," added the speaker, lowering his voice as if fearful some of these powerful beings might be within hearing still. "Of course it was too long ago fur any livin' person to swar to the story; but folks did say that all this money didn't come by no fair or square ways; that the old Captain that fust settled at this point used to sail around, 'bout the time we fought the Britishers, with a black snake coiled round his masthead for a flag, and that that thar black snake was the terror of the Gulf."

"You mean he was a pirate?" asked Ted, in breathless interest.

"Suthin' pretty nigh to one—pretty nigh to it," answered the old native, nodding. "At any rate, he come up here with a pile of money, and bought land from the blue-water mark as fur back as the hills, and settled down here with a wife that was

some sort of a furriner, to raise a family. And they did rise like yeast-made bread; for money's a powerful strong leaven, younker. They kep a risin' and a risin' until the big log-house the old Captain built couldn't nigh hold them. Then Jedge Denham, his son, built that house up thar. He married some grand lady across the water, and she named it Heron Hall from her English home; and she had the white heron put up over the doors and the cupola; and folks whispered that now the heron had swallowed the snake. But it hadn't," remarked the speaker, with emphasis. "Great and grand as the Denhams were, that thar black snake stuck. Thar was a cuss on its old work they couldn't shake off. The Good Book says that the sins of the parent will be visited on the children, and they *are*. Folks can't go piratin' around the world with a black snake on their mast-heads and expect the Lord will forget."

"Why, what happened?" asked Ted, eagerly.

"The family was 'visited,' younker," answered the old fisherman, gravely. "Though thar was plenty of fine, handsome Denhams, and they was preachers and soldiers and sailors, as you can see, every now and then thar was a boy or girl born with the snake-eye and the snake-voice and the

snake-temper. Most generally, along of their havin' good mothers, the Lord was merciful and that child died young. But if it growed up, it was a terror and a cuss to everybody round it. And the last Squire was one of them snake children. He was puny and peaky, but the doctors wouldn't let him die like the rest. They just physicked him and plastered him and rubbed him and kept him alive, and he growed up strong and well, and that cuss snake stood up in *him,* for sartain. He was a terror sure—gamblin' and bettin', drinkin', hoss-racin', doin' everything wild and scan'lous he could. He broke his poor wife's heart, and he druv his daughter to run away and get married, and he grew wusser and wilder and cusseder every day. He kept a losin' and a losin' his money, and he'd go ragin' and hissin' round the house, and then clear out somewhar and gamble more; until one night about six years ago he went off in a fit of appleplexy, and the lawyers, when they come to settle things, hed to run up a red flag and sell everything to pay the old Squire's debts."

"And Colonel Jarvis bought the place," added Ted.

"Ya-as," answered the old fisherman slowly; "and I guess he ain't found it much of a bargain,

younker. If he'd asked folks about this ere point, they'd hev told him so. The black snake cuss is hangin' to that place still."

"How?" asked Ted, conscious of an unpleasant creep in his blood as the old speaker fixed his dull, gray eyes impressively on his face.

"You don't 'spect any one wild and wicked as old Squire Denham can rest. Why, it's agin nature, boy. I don't want to say nothin' to frighten folks off, but it's only fair to tell you that you all will hear from him if you stay long enough at Heron Hall. He ain't layin' quiet and peaceful in his grave, lettin' the grass grow over him. No, *sir!* Old Squire Denham's around yet, bustin' with hate and spite and snake-temper."

"What does he do?" inquired Ted, feeling that he might as well hear the whole ghostly story, and congratulating himself that little Rick was still racing on the sands out of reach.

"'Tain't fur Christian folks to know what he does, younker; but thar's been mighty curious things heard and seen at Heron Hall. Lights a flashin' and voices talkin' when no livin' creetur was nigh it, and groanin's and clankin's and moanin's like creeturs in pain."

"Cats in the cellar, I guess," said Ted lightly.

"I've heard them outmoan any ghost that ever walked. And as for lights and voices, we'll show you lights and voices up there in earnest now; for there's a crowd of us, and we mean to make things lively in the old snake roost. We don't believe in ghosts, you know," continued Ted, feeling that it was time to show his standard. "We don't think God would let any evil spirit come back to do us harm. And we believe we have good angels to watch over us."

"Ye do!" cried the old man, staring blankly at this announcement.

"We are Catholics, you know," said Ted, frankly, "Roman Catholics."

"Land sakes!" observed the other. "Ye don't tell me so! Now, I'd never hev thought it. Romanists! That is curious, indeed."

"I suppose there is no Catholic church anywhere near here?" asked Ted.

"No, thar ain't. But I've heard that long ago thar was one in Heron Hall."

"A chapel!" exclaimed his listener eagerly. "Where?"

"Dunno," was the answer. "Reckon it's all broke up long ago; but I've heard that one of the furrin wives the Denhams married was a Roman-

ist, and had a chapel with candles and cross and images in it. She didn't live long. Si Lynn showed me her picture one day when he and Lizy Jane was a cleanin' up the house. She's standin' all dressed up in her weddin' clothes, over the big chimney-place in the hall. 'Bout the prettiest picture I ever seen. Reckon things would hev been different at the Hall if a woman like that could hev riz children. But she died when her first baby was born. Wall, I guess my old woman's lookin' fur me to come home to supper." He stood up and straightened his stiffened limbs. "I hope I heven't skeered you by my stories, younker; but it's only fair fur you to know what you're buckin' up agin at Heron Hall!"

"Oh, I have heard!" answered Ted brightly. "Colonel Jarvis warned me before we came. We're here to lay the ghosts, and"—here our young Captain's curly head gave his great-grandfather's determined nod—"we'll do it."

CHAPTER XV

A NOTE OF ALARM

THE sunset was flaming in the sand hills, and the western sky was a radiant cloud-gate of purple and gold, as Ted took his way back to Heron Hall, little Rick and Bowser bounding gaily at his side. Kit and Nell, their duties done, came skipping out to meet him, brimful of delightful intelligence.

"O Ted, there's a churn in the kitchen pantry and Margaret says we will make butter! And we are going to have hot waffles for tea. And, O Ted, we've found the queerest little room back of the library! It has a stained-glass window in it, and something like an altar, but it is all filled with rubbish. Mama says Kit and I may clear it out and make an oratory. Sister Angela says that every house ought to have an oratory. And, oh, I think it is the loveliest house I ever saw! I'm not a bit afraid here. Are you?"

"Afraid of what?" asked Ted boldly.

"Oh, I don't know!" answered Kit. "Aunt Fan

says she hopes it's all right, but there's something about the house makes her flesh creep."

"Pooh!" said Ted lightly. "Aunt Fan had better take some quinine."

The remark convinced our young Captain, however, that it would be wise to keep the old fisherman's story to himself. The narrative of the black snake would not conduce to the peace and comfort of the family. Ted didn't believe any such nonsense, of course—no St. Elmer's boy would. Yet the thought of the old pirate and the curse upon his race *would* come back to him unpleasantly that evening, when the tall shaded lamps were lit, and the merry supper in the great wainscoted dining room was done, and the children gathered around the fire in the hall. The flames, leaping and flashing in the big chimney, made the old portraits on the walls stand out almost like living faces from the dark background.

Stern, haughty, high-bred faces they were, with one exception—the fair bride whose full-length picture hung over the fireplace—the young wife who for one brief year had brought the old Faith to Heron Hall. "Muriel" was inscribed on the frame; and it seemed a fitting name for the beautiful girl standing in her white robes like a guardian

spirit over the hearthstone, as if she lingered to bless and protect it still.

And when, as was the custom, the young Thorntons gathered about the fire for the nightly Rosary, the sweet face seemed to smile down upon them as if in joy at hearing again the holy, familiar sounds. Cheered strangely by that smile, whose light scattered all the gloom of the old fisherman's story, Captain Ted picked up his little brother, who always dropped off to sleep before the third decade, and carried him to the room they were to occupy together. Bowser followed his young masters; and all three, worn out with the day's excitement, slept like tops until morning. Even Aunt Fan could find no fault with the cosy little chamber adjoining the rosebud room of Kit and Nell; while dad, strangely soothed by the voice of the sea and the whisper of the pines, had no need of the "drops" he usually required to give him rest.

Only good Mammy Meg looked pale and worn next morning. Her omelet was not up to its usually feathery lightness, and her biscuits did not rise in their accustomed way.

"Sure no, ma'am, it isn't the new oven at all. The range is everything I could ask. But I've

one of me headaches," she explained to Mrs. Thornton. "I never could sleep in a strange place, and the sea sounds quare and lonesome in the dark."

And brave Mammy Meg, having a banshee in her own family, determined she would keep to herself what she had heard and seen, and not frighten the "crathurs" she had come to help and to serve.

"Only I'd like the loan of a blessed candle, if ye have one," she said to Aunt Fan the next night. "Me old mother—God rest her!—told me always to burn one when I slept in a strange place."

But Aunt Fan and every one else failed to notice that, despite the blessed candle, Mammy Meg evidently did not rest. She was nervous and distracted; her hand lost its cunning; flapjacks were heavy, and waffles lacked the proper golden brown. Still, with real cream coming up in big pitchers to the breakfast table, fresh-laid eggs discovered daily in the twenty nests, appetites sharpened by the sea breezes, Mammy Meg's failures awakened no criticism.

The little rubbish room behind the library, which seemed to have escaped notice in the general furbishing up of the house, was taken in hand

by Kit and Nell, and cleaned out vigorously. Strange things were found among its old books and papers and bottles. There were silver candlesticks, a crucifix of carved ivory, beautiful altar-cloths of linen and lace, and a picture of the Blessed Mother and her Divine Child. The little room had evidently once been a portion of the lower hallway, partitioned off years ago by the master of Heron Hall, to please his Catholic bride. The wide oriel of stained glass seemed to make it most fitting for an oratory.

The children went to work with a will; and when mama was called up to view the result, not a cobweb or dust speck was visible on the dark paneled walls. The sunset streamed through the rainbow-hued window on the lace-draped altar with its shining candlesticks; the sweet face of Mother Mary smiled over all; while the quaint little silver lamp burning before the crucifix told that the light of faith had been once more kindled in the gentle Muriel's home.

But Ted, coming into the big pantry of the kitchen that evening to put away a string of fish he had bought on the shore for the Friday breakfast, heard Lizy Jane, who did the family washing, gasping a breathless story to Mammy Meg.

"I saw him," she panted—"I saw him plain as I see you now, Mrs. Malone! It was the dead Squire himself."

"Whisht now, whisht!" answered Mammy Meg anxiously. "Sure I'm not misdoubtin' ye, woman; but don't be blatherin' it about before the childer here. Ye know innocent crathurs like them can't see things like you or me; and I was born with a caul—worse luck to me! Drink this sup of tea now; it will hearten ye up. And say nothin' to any one of what ye heard or saw, but go off with yerself home."

"I darn't," replied Lizy Jane, who, like her good man, Si Lynn, was a long and lean and raw-boned product of this storm-beaten coast. "If I saw it again, my heart would stop. I'd drop dead, I know."

"What was it like?" asked Mammy Meg, eagerly.

"Like!" echoed Lizy Jane. "It wasn't *like* nobody. It was himself—old Squire Nick Denham—not when he was old, but when he was young. The preachers tell us that the years drop from us like a garment, and they had dropped from him. It was the same Nick Denham, with the glitter in his eye and the snake-hiss on his lips, that I've

seen many a time on these sands forty years ago. He 'walks,' as every one at Heron Point knows."

"And for what?" asked Mammy Meg, excitedly.

"To hold his own. Si says he will never let any creature live in Heron Hall. It's a wonder you've been left in quiet and peace this long, Mrs. Malone."

"We haven't," said Mammy Meg, in a shaken voice. "Sure we haven't been left in quiet and peace, woman. I don't mind tellin' ye now what I haven't dared breathe to any one in this house. What I've gone through these past two weeks is enough to whiten every hair on me head, Mrs. Lynn. The groanin', the clankin', the whisperin', the smells of brimstone and sulphur that are around me every night, it is as if the lost souls were tryin' to drag me off with them before the break of day. Whether it's for the caul or me sins I can't tell. But sure I can bear it," added Mammy Meg, bravely steadying the tremor in her voice. "I can bear it. I'll not have the childer frightened off from an elegant place like this, with no rent to pay, and coal and wood in plenty, and a milch cow, and twenty layin' hens. No, Mrs. Lynn, I'll not have them druv off by any devil that ever

broke loose from below—God forgive me for that same word! I'll stand up till the master gets back his life and strength again, if it kills me entirely——"

"No, you shan't!" said a cheerful boyish voice, and Ted was behind his good old nurse with both arms around her neck. "You'll not stand it another night, you dear old plucky Mammy Meg! So the ghosts have tackled you, and you wouldn't tell?"

"Whisht now, dear!" said the good woman, anxiously. "Oh, you young rapscallion, what call had you to be listenin' to two old women tellin' tales over their tea?"

"You shan't sleep in that room another night," said Ted decidedly. "I won't have your pretty curly hair turned gray by any ghosts while *I* hold the fort. I knew there was something wrong when you burned the waffles this morning."

"Sure there was—there was! My hand has got that trimbly I can't hold aither a spoon or a fork. But I can stand it, jewel! I'm an old fool to be talkin' of noises and smells in a fine place like this, where ye are all so happy and lucky. It's because I'm an old sinner that they throuble me, darlint! I'll not mind."

"I'll not have it," said Ted, with his great-grandfather's nod. "If there are any ghosts to be tackled about here, it's my business to get a grip on them. You tumble into my room with little Rick to-night, and Bowser and I will settle the ghosts."

"No, no, Master Teddy darlint—no!" said Mammy Meg, in great alarm. "I never meant you should hear a word of this. It will frighten yer mother and the childer."

"No, it won't; for they shan't hear a word of it. Come, Mrs. Lynn—I'll see you home; and the old Squire won't trouble us, I promise you. He has no further business at Heron Hall."

And, reassured by Ted's cheery tone and words, Lizy Jane consented to be escorted to her little cottage, about a quarter of a mile from the great house, in the fertile uplands, where the brown fields and meadows stood waiting the early planting. Birds were already twittering in their new-made nests, and all things whispered of life and hope and spring.

Old Si, sitting in his front door, smoking his evening pipe, listened stolidly to Lizy Jane's excited story.

"It ain't no more than I expected," he re-

marked. "Them Denhams ain't agoin' to let that thar house go without a fight fur it. Livin' or dead, they're agoin' to hold Heron Hall. And that thar west wing is the wust bit of it all. It was the old house, ye see, built by the fust Denham that settled at the Point here. They do say that it is honeycombed with cellars whar he stored things he had brought from sea and didn't care to show in the light of day. Whether he got them by smugglin' or piratin', nobody could say. No, that thar west wing ain't a good place. Best keep clear of it, younker," warned old Si, with a parting nod.

And it was in the west wing that poor Mammy Meg had tried to sleep.

"My bargain was to oust the ghosts," thought Captain Ted, as he strode homeward in the moonlight. "Bowser and I will hold the west wing tonight, or we'll know why!"

CHAPTER XVI

A NIGHT IN THE WEST WING

TED had reckoned, however, without his Mammy Meg. All his persuasion could not induce that faithful creature to give up her post.

"Sure, and won't the mistress and Miss Fanny and the childer be wonderin' what sort of an old goose I am to be takin' yer place, Master Ted? No, me darlint! Ye can bring the dog, if ye must have it so, and I'll fix the little room next to mine for ye. Ye can watch there, but I'd not leave ye in that place alone for all the gold in the Indies."

And with this compromise Ted had to rest content. So, when the Rosary, that was said now in the little oratory, was over, and dad, who spent his evenings pleasantly by the library fire, was rolled back into his own big room, and Kit and Nell and little Rick were safely disposed of for the night, Ted and Bowser betook themselves to the west wing.

It was a long, low, two-story building, that seemed to crouch behind the big house as if striv-

ing to hide itself. The stout old timbers, seasoned by sun and storm, still stood firm; but the iron bolts had become loosened, and the ivied chimneys were crumbling. The home of the first Denhams was, in fact, slowly tottering to its fall. As a residence, it had been given up by the family for years; but it contained the former kitchens, storerooms, pantries and closets, the servants' hall and bedrooms. These latter were filled with cumbrous furniture banished from the great house half a century ago. The pines grew close to the walls; a heavy growth of ivy shrouded the dormer windows; all was gloom and desolation. Ted felt that the blessing of the white-robed Muriel had not reached the west wing of Heron Hall.

As became the commanding officer of a doubtful outpost, our Captain made his rounds before he retired for the night; Bowser, his trusty lieutenant, nosing curiously about beside him, and wondering doubtless "what was up." There were rats in the old wainscot, Bowser seemed to think; for he sniffed about with low growls and pricked ears as if prepared for battle; while Ted barred doors and windows and made everything tight and fast before he ascended the steep, crooked

steps to the little room in which he was to pass the night.

Mammy Meg had prepared it for her brave protector. A cheery log fire blazed in the old black chimney-place; a worn rug was laid before it for Bowser's comfort; the bed was made up with spotless linen, and the good woman was patting a pair of snowy pillows into proper plumpness for her boy; while, best of all, a crystal pitcher of milk and a plate of caraway cookies stood invitingly on the toilet table.

"Nothing bad about this," said Ted, looking around with great satisfaction. "I wouldn't blame any ghost for trying to butt in here."

"Whisht now!" said Mammy Meg anxiously. "Don't be namin' names, Teddy dear. Ye're the brave, bold lad to be standin' by yer poor old nurse; and it warms me heart to have ye here. With God's blessin', we'll have a quiet night."

And, reassured by her boy's presence, the good woman, who was quite worn out with her fears, went into her own room and was soon peacefully asleep. Ted, we must confess, was more wakeful. The bravest and wisest of boys can not be altogether proof against such grisly stories as had been poured into his ears of late; and the old west

wing, in its gloom and desolation, seemed to embody all the dark traditions of Heron Hall. Here the old pirate captain had lived; here he had hoarded and hidden his ill-gotten wealth; here he had died, perhaps in remorse and despair.

"Bowser, old chap," said Ted to his half-dozing companion, "if this west wing belonged to us, it shouldn't stand a week. We'd tumble the old snake roost down, and level it into a tennis court. Wouldn't we, Bowser?"

And our young Captain, having disposed of Mammy Meg's seedcakes and milk, said his prayers, gave a good-night rub to old Bowser's shaggy back, and tumbled into bed. It was some time before he could sleep. The wind was rising with the night; there was a deeper and fiercer note in the boom of the waves; the shutters were shaking on their fastenings; the barred doors rattled as if under impatient hands; the old house seemed creaking and straining like a ship at sea. Now and then a fierce gust would sweep down the chimney and make the great logs flare into sudden blaze and smoke; while everywhere—under the eaves, and from the pines, and through the corridors and stairways—there came moanings and whisperings as of creatures in pain.

It was only the wind, as Ted knew. Luckily, he was, as all soldiers should be, a sturdy, clear-headed fellow, not given to imaginings.

Yet, however straight-seeing eyes may be, it is not pleasant to keep them open in the darkness, with the sea booming a deep accompaniment to the voice of a rising storm, and stories of old pirates and squires, who could not rest in their graves, blending with the moan of the wind through a haunted hall. It was not until Ted harked back to his school-days, and began to drone over the Latin lines learned in many a penitential hour of "jug," that he drifted off into a dream world, where he seemed to be steering a big ship through a wild clamor of wind and storm. The sky was dark with ragged clouds; the waves stretched, a wide waste of angry foam-crests into vast, unseen distances; his ship had no sails nor spars, only one tall mast, from which floated the old college banner, St. Elmer's blue and white cross, with its motto, *Deo Duce*. And gathered upon the deck was Captain Ted's only crew—his mother, dad in his big rolling chair, Kit, Nell, little Rick, Mammy Meg, Aunt Fan, and old Bowser, faithful even in dreams.

Then suddenly, as he swept over this unknown

sea, his strong hand upon the helm, a cry of terror broke from his mother's lips; and, looking back, he saw bearing down upon him in full sail the pirate ship of the Denhams, the black snake coiled about her masthead, her decks crowded with a wild, fierce crew; while in front of all, with the dark, strange face, the glittering eyes Ted knew so well, stood the giant of the Bean Stalk, Mr. Sharkey, a full-fledged pirate chief.

In vain Captain Ted tried to steer away: with a mighty crash the two ships came together, and then—then—Ted found himself sitting up in bed, with the old house fairly rocking beneath him, and Bowser's wild bark blending with Mammy Meg's terrified shriek:

"Murder, murder! Are ye alive at all, lad, that ye can sleep through this? Sure every devil below must have broke loose to-night!"

Ted sprang to his feet. The March equinoctial had burst upon the shore in all its fury. The roar of the waves and the shriek of the wind made a deafening clamor, through which came the crash of breaking trees, the rattle of falling shutters, and the crackling of shivered glass. The fire was out, and Mammy Meg loomed up a ghostly figure in the darkness, sobbing in hysterical terror.

"Sure it's the worst of all—the worst of all! I didn't dare move hand or foot to call ye, lad, for fear the devils would throttle me. I heard them cursin' as plain as I hear meself now. And the dog heard them too. He came into me room beyant, mad with fright. And then—then I could hold in no longer; for I thought, lad, some hurt had come to ye. O God have mercy on us all! What is that!" shrieked Mammy Meg wildly, as the whole house shook with a thundering roar and crash, that was followed by a cry—a cry so piercing, so despairing, that it chilled every drop of blood in our brave Captain's veins.

For a moment he stood breathless, speechless, mute with horror such as he had never felt before; then, with Bowser barking wildly at his heels, he sprang into the adjoining room, whence the cry had seemed to come. He was met by a fierce rush of wind and sleet. The big chimney, crumbling under its two hundred years, had gone down, leaving a wide, ragged-edged void open to the storm.

"Back, Bowser!—back!" shouted our Captain to his trusty comrade, who, wild with excitement, was ready to leap into the gap. "Back, I say! What's the matter with you? This settles our bout with the ghosts to-night. We'll have to get

out of here before the whole old snake roost topples down on us. Come, Mammy Meg! Bowser old chap, come along!"

It was rather a shaken trio, it must be confessed, that beat a rapid retreat through the dark corridors and stairways of the west wing to the great house that stood unshaken in the storm. The sleepers there, too, had been roused by the last crash. The girls had fled in terror into Aunt Fan's room. Little Rick was crying piteously; and when Mammy Meg hurried in to quiet her baby, Ted found "little mother" wandering up the big stairs, pale and nervous.

"O Ted, where have you been? I was so frightened about you, dear, when Rick cried that you were not with him. What has happened, Ted?"

"One of the chimneys in the wing tumbled in, that's all," answered Ted cheerily. "I was over there, taking care of Mammy Meg, who felt a little lonely in the storm. Gracious! it's a howler, isn't it? How's father standing it?"

"It roused him," said his mother anxiously. "He seemed very wide awake and nervous. He insisted upon getting up, saying that he could not sleep. And the fire is out in his room. I think, if you would roll him into the library, Ted—it's

warm and pleasant in there—he will be more comfortable."

"All right!" answered Ted. "I'll look out for dad. Don't worry, mother dear. Everybody is safe now, and this old house is as solid as Gibraltar. There is always a big blow, this time of year, on the coast—the equinoctial, you know. You go up with the girls, before Aunt Fan gets them into hysterics, and I'll hold the fort with dad down here."

And Ted, who, in the light and warmth and strength of the big house, had quite recovered his spirit and nerve, had his loving way. Mama went upstairs to soothe her little girls, who, at Aunt Fan's cheerful suggestion, were saying prayers for those "in danger of death"; while Ted threw an armful of wood on the library fire, and rolled dad into the pleasant warmth. His dark eyes fixed upon the fire had a brighter look than usual, and he worked his helpless hands every now and then as if some thrill of the old life was tingling in nerve and vein.

Meantime the fury of the storm seemed to be spent. The wind was dying away into fitful gusts and moanings, and the thunderous roar of the breakers had softened into a dull, measured boom

like the beat of retreating drums. The old house was very still. Mama must have fallen asleep upstairs with the girls; old Bowser had gone to his usual bed on little Rick's hearth-rug; dad was dozing comfortably at last in his easy-chair; and Ted himself began to nod. Really, there seemed no further need for our Captain to keep awake.

It had been a tough night, he thought, as he stretched his arms above his curly head and leaned back in the old cushioned chair—a very tough night. That old west wing ought to come down before it tumbled over and killed some one. He would write to Mr. Jarvis about it to-morrow. The place would make a fine tennis court—just the shape and size. Ted wasn't quite sure that 'twould be wise to suggest this. Gentlemen of middle age do not always realize the value of tennis courts. The whole matter was growing rather hazy before our Captain's half-closed eyes when a sudden sound startled him into wide-awake attention.

Somebody was stirring softly in the little oratory—was stealing in through its half-open door. He turned, and with a sharp cry of alarm sprang to his feet. Mr. Sharkey, the counterfeiter, pale, demon-eyed, desperate, confronted his recent youthful dupe.

CHAPTER XVII

VICTORY

MR. SHARKEY indeed; but not the trim, dapper Sharkey Ted had known. A blood-stained handkerchief was knotted about his head, his throat was bared, his clothes covered with grime and dust. All this our Captain seemed to see in one flashing glance; for as their eyes met, the Giant of the Bean Stalk, with a low-hissed curse, was upon him, his long slim hands grasping Ted's throat.

"Ah, you young bloodhound—you are on the watch, eh—on the watch! Make one sound and I—I will kill you—kill you!"

It was a foul tackle; but Ted met it with all his football skill, struggling fiercely and manfully as the deadly grip tightened on his throat, shutting off breath and sight; and his brain grew dizzy and his young life seemed going out in an agony of darkness, while Sharkey's voice sounded like a roar of rushing waters in his ear, and a thousand pictures flashed into his mind. The office in the Bean Stalk, Mr. Trapp with his glittering scarf-

pin, Dolly in her feathers and furs, the white walls of Fort Kostka, the great stained window in the college chapel where St. Michael blazed out at Benediction time across the sunset sky. *"Ora pro nobis;"* the choir was singing—*"Ora pro nobis, Mater Dei"*—and then sound and sight seemed to snap off in an awful crash, and dad's voice was ringing out with all the strength of old.

"You villain—you murderous villain!" and dad—dad!—was actually standing with clenched fists and blazing eyes, while Sharkey lay in a helpless heap at his feet.

Then Ted never knew exactly what happened; it takes a minute or two for even a football captain to get wits and breath into working order after such a shock. They told him afterward that his wild cries of joy roused the house. They all came rushing down—mother and the girls—the latter, with their pretty curls flying; Aunt Fan with her hair on end, Mammy Meg with little Rick holding to her skirts, and Bowser barking wildly behind her. And they found Sharkey lying stunned and senseless on the hearth-rug, floored by the mighty blow dad had learned from his English boxing-master of long ago; dad, whose long dream was broken at last, dad, who, roused

by the murderous attack on his boy, had started up into life and strength to defend him. Realizing perhaps that his beloved commander-in-chief was once more at the front, our sturdy Captain now sank with a little cry into Mammy Meg's arms and fainted outright.

For three whole days he was ill—too ill to walk or to talk, which really was very hard to bear. It is bad enough for a boy to be ill even in quiet times, but to be shut up in a darkened room, with doctors, coroners, reporters, and police officers investigating things, and the whole house thrilling with excitement, is truly the toughest kind of luck. At the end of the third day, however, Ted woke up from a long nap, to find that the queer buzzing pain in his head was altogether gone, and that he would like to have something more solid than gruel and toast for supper. Kit, who was on duty as nurse, fully impressed with the responsibilities of her position, was seated solemnly by the darkened window, when a well-aimed pillow came flying at her head, and her patient sat up recklessly.

"Ted!" she gasped in dismay. "Oh, he is delirious again!"

"Delirious!" scoffed her patient. "Not much! I'm up again, and in the game. Hand over those

oranges, Kit, and let me begin on one of them. Isn't that a pitcher of milk I see in the window? Geewhillikins! I'm as hungry as Kilkannegan himself. How long has it been since I've had a square meal?"

"You've been sick three days—since—since—but you must not talk, Ted. Oh, I am so glad you are better! But the doctor said you must not talk—the doctor that came up to see Mr. Sharkey."

"Sharkey?" echoed Ted. "Oh, yes, I remember! Sharkey tackled me." And now the speaker's face lighted up into eager interest. "And dad—dad—what has happened to dad, Kit?"

"Oh, he is better! He is getting well; he is almost like he used to be, Ted, only he can't walk very far yet. Mama says it's a miracle, and we ought to thank God for it as long as we live. When dad saw that awful man trying to choke you, he just roused right up and knocked him down. The doctors say a great shock will cure people sometimes, just that way."

"And dad did for Sharkey, you mean? Laid him out for good and all?" said Ted, breathlessly —"killed him?"

"Oh, no! He was hurt anyhow—dreadfully.

The chimney had fallen on him—but the doctor said you mustn't talk about it, Ted. You *mustn't* talk!"

"Pooh, nonsense! Go on, Kit! I've simply *got* to hear the whole thing now, or I'll be delirious in earnest. The chimney fell on him, you say? What was he doing under the chimney? I thought he came here to have it out with me for blowing on him."

"Ted, Ted, you *mustn't* talk—the doctor said so!" protested his small nurse, desperately.

"Then I won't, I won't! *You* do the talking, and I'll listen. Stick to the track if you can, Kit, and make a straight story. What brought Sharkey up to Heron Hall?"

"It used to be his mother's house," explained Kit. "He was the old Squire's grandson, and he knew all about the cellars under the west wing, and what a nice hiding-place they made. Oh, you don't know what a fine hiding-place it was for bad men, Ted—with a secret passage running away to the sand hills, and walled up rooms where they had been making bad money for years—the kind of bad money they sent you round with in town. It was all made here under the west wing. They had fires down there, and presses, and things to

coin dollars and print notes—and, oh, everything! And they used to steal into the secret passage at night, and people would think they were ghosts and be scared off from Heron Hall. But after we came they got frightened and didn't want to work, and Mr. Sharkey came down himself to try and keep them at it, or move his things somewhere else; and he was in there with another man the night of the storm. Mammy Meg heard them cursing and swearing——"

"Through her chimney!" exclaimed Ted, who was beginning to see things clearly. "Her chimney went right down to their den, I suppose?"

"Yes; and when it tumbled down, it fell on them and blocked the passage out. The other man —the fellow with the false whiskers—was killed. They found him all crushed to death; and then Sharkey, who was hurt awfully, too, tried to get out. There was one way he knew—a passageway that opened into this big house; but when he got there he found we had made it into an oratory, Ted; and he had to steal through the library. He thought everybody had gone to bed, I suppose; and when he found you watching——"

"He turned devil outright," said Ted, nodding.

"Yes," said Kit gravely, "I guess he did, Ted;

and he is dying like that now. The doctors say they don't know how he made that last fight, he was so dreadfully hurt. They put him upstairs in the spare room, and there's a man nurse the police sent taking care of him. But he has told mama he can do nothing with him: he is the worst devil he ever met. We say the Beads for him every night, but it doesn't seem to do him any good," concluded Kit, with a hopeless shake of her pretty head—"not a bit."

And everybody seemed pretty much of the same opinion, as Ted found when he was up and able to investigate matters for himself. It was a glad getting up for our Captain; for all was hope and sunshine at Heron Hall. The searchlight of the law had fallen upon its ghosts, and they had vanished into empty air. The trees were budding, the grass growing green in the sheltered garden beds; crocuses and tulips were already donning their Easter bonnets; and dad was slowly walking the big portico, leaning on Ted's arm. Only one shadow lingered in the spring sunshine of the happy home—the last of the Denham race lay in one of its upper chambers dying in darkness and despair.

It was about a week after the storm that a glad

shout from little Rick announced the arrival of a welcome visitor; and he and Bowser came bounding up the cedar avenue escorting the newcomer —a pleasant-faced old gentleman with silver hair and kind gray eyes.

"Father Barry, Mama—Father Barry!" rang out Rick's delighted cry; and in a moment everybody was at the door to meet the fatherly greeting and blessing.

"Really, when one hears of miracles like this, it becomes a pastor to investigate," said the good priest, his face lighting up as he grasped dad's hand. "And, although I suppose the doctors explained it to their satisfaction, we have no less reason to bless God for His great mercy and love. But it is not altogether to congratulate you, dear friends, that I come to-day. I am in search of a sheep—a lost sheep that was a lamb in my little fold less than twenty years ago."

"Not—not Ned Sharkey, surely, Father!" exclaimed dad, in amazement. "Why, I caught him forging checks before Ted was born! He has been the blackest of black sheep always."

"Ah, no, no!" said Father Barry softly. "When I knew him he was as white a lamb as this"—patting little Rick's head. "His mother

was dead, but he had a good grandmother, who sent him to St. John's School; and he was as good and innocent a boy as you could find. But the grandmother died when little Ned was twelve years old, and his father took him in hand; and after that—after that my poor lamb went astray into brier, bramble, and pit where lambs are lost; and now you have him here, I understand."

"Yes," answered dad, "to my sorrow we have. The doctors said it would be fatal to move him."

"And they have left him to your charity, my dear friends?"

"Well, scarcely, Father. It is hard to think of charity when I recall that villain's murderous clutch on my boy's throat. The city authorities have him in charge, and have sent up some one to watch and care for him. This pitying little wife of mine would have gone to him, but his keeper begged me to keep her out of the room."

"Poor fellow!" said Father Barry sadly. "It is the madness of despair, my friend. I have seen it before. I would like to go to him at once."

"You, Father!" said dad. "He would not see you, I am sure."

"We will not ask him," answered Father Barry, smiling. "Let Ted here take me to his door, my

friends—that is all I ask. I will introduce myself."

"As you please, then, Father," said dad; "though I fear you will find this case beyond even your charity."

"He is too far gone to pitch anything at your head, Father," said Ted, as he led the way up the stairs. "But I wouldn't get too close to him."

"Have no fear, my son," said the priest, quietly. "He will not harm me, I am sure. Is this the room? Thanks! I will go right in."

And he passed quietly in; Ted, anxious for his loved pastor's safety, lingering on the threshold.

The sickroom was in all the confusion of a battleground. Bottles, bandages, glasses, were scattered over the floor, where the patient had flung them in his fury and pain. Sharkey lay with starting eyes and foaming lips, under the strong hands of his keeper, who was tightening a leather strap that held him to the bed.

"I had to do it, Doctor," the man explained, believing the newcomer to be the physician. "He's got the dying strength on him now, and my life or anybody else's isn't safe with him. I just *have* to strap him down——"

And then the outburst of hissing curses from

the patient's lips suddenly ceased, for a gentle hand was laid on the death-dampening brow.

"Ned, my poor boy!" said a low voice. "Don't you know me—don't you remember—Father *Tom?*"

A shriek of despair came from the frothing lips, and then a volley of awful words that chilled the young listener's blood. But "Father Tom" was an old soldier of the Cross, and stood his ground unmoved.

"Sh-sh-sh!" he said, in the calm voice that had stilled tumult and strife in the schoolroom and playground of yore. "My poor boy, you are suffering, I know; but this won't do—this won't do. Your old father has come to help you, my son. I'm not too late, Ned—it's never too late. Loosen the strap," said Father Barry to the staring keeper, as the curses died away in a long, hoarse sob, "and leave me alone with him. I can manage him now."

And Ted listened no longer, but stole away with a strange, sweet awe in his heart, as if he had heard the rustle of angel wings.

CHAPTER XVIII

HAPPY DAYS AT HERON HALL

THERE was company in the parlor—there was often company now. The story of Heron Hall had gone abroad; forgetful friends had been roused into interest or curiosity, and on these bright spring days it was only a pleasant drive from the nearest railway station for those who could afford to hire carriage and horse. But the sound of gay voices and laughter seemed to jar on our young Captain just now, and he stole quietly out of the house into the April sunshine.

Men were busy clearing away the ruins of the west wing; for the big chimney, wide enough to roast an ox, had, in its crash, carried away the best part of the north wall. The secrets of the counterfeiters' den were laid bare to the light—the vault in which they had worked, and the narrow, arched passageway through which they went and came from the sand hills without.

Ted stood watching awhile with interest. He would like to have investigated more closely;

but ropes were stretched about the ruin, and Mr. Jarvis' orders were imperative.

"It's a big job," said one of the men, pausing to mop his brow. "There's enough bricks in this chimney to build a good-sized house, but they're as crumbly as dirt. It's a wonder it didn't fall long ago and kill decenter folks than them rascals that was at their devil's work under it that night. The chap that we tuk out never knew what hurt him, I guess. How is the other fellow that nabbed you?"

"Very bad," answered Ted gravely.

"Well, I guess no one will cry for him," said the man, with a short laugh, as he went back to his work; and Ted kept on to the beach, where the tide was out, and old Pete the fisherman sat on the wharf mending his drag nets.

"Gettin' round pretty peart again?" he said, with a friendly nod.

"Oh, yes! I'm all right," answered Ted cheerily.

"Lands! lands!" murmured the old man. "To think of the last of the Denham blood endin' like that chap up there! You see, poor Miss Lucy died, and then that there sporty husband of hers let the boy go to the old Nick, and showed him

the quickest way, I reckon. His grandmother used to hev him up here sometimes when the old Squire was on one of his wild trips, and he learned all about the old house then. He was one of the snake children, the very image, I hear, of his grandfather. No wonder some folks tuk him for the Squire's ghost when they met him skulkin' around here in the dark. Well, it's all up with him now, I guess. The black snake of the old pirate is scotched at last."

And old Pete rose slowly with his nets, and sauntered back to his cabin, leaving Ted to stretch himself on the sands, his arms clasped under his curly head, his eyes fixed on the sunset sky, while his thoughts went back to all the strange things that had happened since that morning, now nearly four months ago, when he had dropped the blue and white flag of St. Elmer's to pitch into, with such blind boyish pluck, the bigger game in the camp of Life.

It had been a tough tussle. He had been tricked, downed, and very nearly knocked out; but things had worked out right somehow, after all. Dad was growing better and stronger every day. Mr. Wirt had come back from Europe and was looking after things in town. Judge Waters and Mr.

Jarvis stood ready to help; and some "stocks" that had been thought worthless were booming and jumping in a way that bade fair to make up for their winter tumble. Yes, the storm was pretty well over—our Captain's work was done. And while he was thus thinking, a quiet step came over the sands, and Father Barry soon stood beside him.

"They told me you were here, and I came to find you," he said. "It's all over, Ted. The poor fellow is gone."

"Gone!" echoed Ted, springing to his feet, startled. "You mean Sharkey, Father!"

"Yes, he is gone in a mood of peace and penitence for which I scarcely dared hope," answered Father Barry, and his voice trembled, and there were traces of tears in his kind eyes. "But the thought, the memory of the past, the clasp of his old father's hand, the sound of his voice, drove away the demon of despair. Ah, the good God never forgets, Ted! He remembered the little lamb of long ago."

And as the good priest bared his head, the sunset seemed to make a halo around his silver hair.

"He sent a last word to you, Ted. It was this, 'Forgive me for the harm I did, for the greater

harm I tried to do.'" The priest laid his hand gently on Ted's shoulder.

"Why, of course," answered the boy simply. "I'm glad you got here, Father, and gave him a chance."

"More than a chance, I trust, Ted. It is not for us to judge. All we know is that God's mercy is wider, deeper, more far-reaching than yonder sea. To that mercy he turned at last. We can hope and pray even for him, that light may shine after his dark, sad, sinful day."

For a moment they stood in silence. The rose and gold had faded from the shimmering waves and the paling sky; but where these blended on the far horizon into the violet shadows, a star was trembling—a star like the silver altar lamp at St. Elmer's, that burned night and day before the throne of Mercy and Love.

* * * * *

After this dark episode Heron Hall brightened with the brightening year. When the lilacs flowered dad was out in the garden; and before the June roses bloomed, he was able to take a trip to town.

All its ghosts banished forever, the old Hall fairly brimmed with young life and love and

hope. Dolly, whom Jack had brought down for a few days at the seashore, was so charmed with Kit and Nell, to say nothing of her big boy brother Ted, that she refused to leave; and Jack, realizing perhaps what this merry home circle meant to his motherless little girl, gladly agreed to Mama's proposition that Dolly should make a third in the pretty rosebud room while Miss Burnham went off for her summer holiday.

Then Ted brought up Humpty, who was lingering on, white and hollow-eyed, in the close basement kitchen, and who, the doctors said, would pick up again, they thought, if he could get fresh milk and sea air. And this time the doctors proved right; for in two weeks after his arrival, Humpty had forgotten his "internal injuries," and was hopping around the beach as lively as a sand crab; or, stretched upon the sunny porch, was spelling out the newspapers with the street boy's lively interest in all the happenings in town.

"Jiminy!" he exclaimed one morning when thus engaged. "That's him—that's him, sure!"

"Who?" asked Ted, looking up from the boat he was whittling out for little Rick and Dolly to launch in the rain tub.

"The chap that nearly did for me last winter. That's his picture, sure. Read about it, Ted."

And, staring for a moment at the unmistakable portrait of his "good friend," Ted read:

"Special Officer Grimes has made a haul which commends him to the gratitude of the public. For some months householders in the 14th precinct have been annoyed by a series of thefts almost too petty singly to be brought to the notice of the police. Hats, coats, umbrellas, door mats, milk jars, table linen, have been taken from doors, porches, and yards left open on account of the warm weather, until complaints became so widespread and universal that Officer Grimes was detailed to investigate the matter. He discovered a regular organization of young toughs calling themselves the T. T.'s, or Twenty Thieves, under the direction of a 'Captain Jamborando,' otherwise known as Jim Lane. This youth made his headquarters in an old stable in Blake Street, which was found packed with stolen goods, waiting for delivery to certain small shops on the East Side, where they command ready and unquestioning sale.

"Captain Jamborando, despite his high-sounding name, weakened ignobly when he found him-

self in the grip of the law, and confessed all. It seems that he and his band had been in the employ of the Easy Money Men, distributing their counterfeit coins and bills; and on the exposure of that nefarious concern, these young gamins, trained by the older sharpers, organized for the petty outlawry which bade fair to lead to wider lives of crime. The whole band, including their chief, whose father declines to interfere, have been sent to the State Reform School, where we hope they will receive the stern and salutary lessons they need."

"Jerusalem!" exclaimed Ted. "'Captain Jamborando!' That's Jim Lane, sure enough!"

"Is the Reform School very bad?" asked Humpty eagerly—"worse than a hospital, Ted?"

"For a St. Elmer boy! Why, yes, it's—it's disgraceful," was the excited answer. "But I guess, after this, it's the only place left for Jim."

And every one at Heron Hall, even gentle little mother, was of the same mind.

"Sure that boy was a villyun, as I seen plain by the squint of his eyes the night he took supper with us," said Mammy Meg. "And the dog knew it, too—didn't ye, Bowser? Ye'll pick yer friends wiser after this, Master Ted."

And they were "picked" friends, indeed, that Ted gathered about him when, a few days later, as became the great-grandson of the old soldier who fought at Dorchester Heights, he celebrated the "Glorious Fourth." It was holiday time, of course. Phil Waters came up; and Hal Herndon and Will Leigh, St. Elmer boys who lived in New York; and little Bob Connor, whom Ted had invited for a month to the seashore, to that small henchman's unspeakable delight. Ted was to go back with his old mates for the Freshman class in September. And Colonel Jarvis came loaded with flags and fireworks, to "celebrate," for the first time in thirty years or more, with all the gusto of fourteen.

Heron Hall blossomed out with the Stars and Stripes on cupola and portico. Dolly and Kit and Nell were in red, white, and blue ribbons from top to toe. Mama had a pretty Liberty knot on her breast; and even Aunt Fan, though she felt that things were too gay, and that something would happen before night, wore a white gown and a posy in her belt. And what a dinner there was served in the great dining-room that day! Mammy Meg broke all past records with her fried chicken, her cream gravy, her cherry pie.

All day long the sands and beach blazed with firecrackers and popguns; but night brought the crowning glory of the celebration—the fireworks. Colonel Jarvis had "spread himself" on this with all the delight of a boy. The shore folks gathered from near and far to see the dazzling wonders—fountains and stars and wheels of fire, rockets leaping high and far over the reddening waves, Roman candles scattering showers of rainbow light; and at the last, the very last, after the President's face had blazed out in the darkness, and the Starry Banner flashed high in the summer air, Colonel Jarvis' cheery voice rang forth:

"Let us close, good friends, with a cheer—a cheer for our flag, a cheer for the heroes who have upheld it, and a cheer for our modest young hero who has stood for home and mother against trying odds, and has *won* his fight!"

And then far up into the summer sky flashed the blue and white flag of St. Elmer's, its motto standing out in golden light, *Deo Duce.* And mama slipped her arm around her dear hero, and dad's strong, glad voice led the rousing cheer that made the sand and shore re-echo with——

"Hurrah, hurrah for Captain Ted!"

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